Spring 2023

Denise Austin's Fit Over 50

Spring Fitness Challenge

59 moves and 28 days to a NEW YOU!

BUDGET MEALS

Cheap, simple, healthy recipes for the whole family

PLUS!

Denise shares the best exercises for a bad back

POSITIVE CONNECTIONS

How to deepen relationships and improve your well-being

BELLY BUSTERS

Say so long to flab, and hello to fab!

Sexy at Any Age

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DENISE AUSTIN'S

Fit Over 50

**"Start moving your body,
and your mind and
motivation will follow!"**

14

61

87

Denise Austin's Fit Over 50

SPRING FITNESS CHALLENGE!

Spring 2023, Volume 11

ON THE COVER

14 SPRING FITNESS CHALLENGE
59 moves and 18 days to a NEW YOU!

46 BUDGET MEALS
Cheap, simple, healthy recipes for the whole family

86 SEXY AT ANY AGE
Denise's tips for looking and feeling your best always

72 POSITIVE CONNECTIONS
How to deepen relationships and improve your well-being

8 FITNESS
It's the time of year to create new health goals. Turn here to start sweating!

10 GET MOVING TO STAY YOUNG!
The best thing you can do to feel more energized is exercise

12 WALK YOUR TALK
Put your health goals to action with Denise's Interval Walking Workout!

14 28-DAY SPRING FITNESS CHALLENGE
This series of short workouts targets every part of you—arms, abs, legs, butt and all—to help you rock an amazing body year-round!

30 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER
A sample week of age-defying workouts mixes cardio with strength training and flexibility exercises for amazing results!

32 NUTRITION
Denise shares her tips for healthful eating, plus 27 of her favorite recipes!

34 10 HEART-HEALTHY FOODS
Add these nutritional all-stars to your diet today

36 EASY AS 1-2-3 MEALS
Learn how to make simple—and delectable—dishes from pantry staples

42 KITCHEN ESSENTIALS
Keep these products in stock all year round!

44 BANISH LATE-NIGHT MUNCHIES
And help keep inches from creeping onto your waist!

46 EFFORTLESS SPRING RECIPES
Delicious, easy recipes that are tasty and oh-so-good for your waistline, too!

66 7-DAY MEAL PLAN
A sample week of flavorful make-at-home meals

Throughout this issue are QR codes like the one below. Use your smartphone to scan them for exclusive bonus content, including extra workout videos, nutrition tips and more! Scan here to visit DeniseAustin.com.

68 LIFESTYLE
Advice for how you can make good on your promise to complete your objectives

70 HABIT STACKING
Try these six easy steps to make progress on your goals a little bit at a time!

72 THE POWER OF CONNECTION
Research indicates that our happiness and health are directly correlated to the depth of our relationships

76 MENOPAUSE 101: DEPRESSION & ANXIETY
Here's what you can do about these common symptoms

80 BYE-BYE MENOPAUSE BELLY!
Eating healthfully and staying active are the keys to battling middle age spread

86 IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO FEEL SEXY!
Take it from Denise—you can feel your best at any age. Follow these fun spring fashion tips if you want to dress to impress

92 INCREDIBLE ALOE VERA
This succulent has myriad health benefits, especially for your hair and skin

94 DIY SUGAR SCRUBS
Make this super effective and natural exfoliant at home

96 ASK DENISE
"What are the best exercises for a bad back?"

Left: Denise with her husband, Jeff, on their wedding day, April 30, 1983. The couple will celebrate 40 years of marriage in 2023. Above: Denise and Jeff at home in Hermosa Beach, California.

SPRING IS IN THE AIR!

Hi, everyone! Are you ready to shed those winter layers and get glowing this spring? Now is the perfect time to celebrate renewal, and the suggestions within these pages will help you feel your best. Everything you need to get going is here—including me as a guide to help motivate you!

To get you started on losing weight and toning up for summer, I am unveiling a 28-day Spring Fitness Challenge. It will set you up for a lifetime of feeling amazing, and after 28 days you will see all your hard work paying off in the form of pounds lost; toned, sexy arms and firmer legs; and a faster metabolism. You will feel energized, lighter on your feet and youthful once you finish, so let's do this together!

Spring is the time to blossom, so remember: You are never too old to feel sexy! Whether it's by wearing a special fragrance on a regular day or choosing a dress that makes you feel phenomenal, you can boost your confidence and be happier with who you are in simple ways. Use my tips within to feel sexier and beautiful. It's all in the attitude—I still feel like I'm 40!

Speaking of 40, this spring Jeff and I will celebrate our 40th anniversary! He is the light of my life, and the best decision I ever made. A cornerstone of our relationship has been making health a priority: We still walk every day, we are active (I am a pickleball fan like many of you!), and we eat healthy because we know that will benefit both us and our girls. I can't wait to celebrate 40 years as a couple. I truly cherish knowing our daughters love to spend time with us—my family is everything to me.

Let's enjoy spring, everyone! Make each day count by doing, moving and having fun! Commit to getting the most out of this season so you can set yourself up for a celebration-filled summer. You are worth it!

Denise Austin xoxo

Make every day an EVER BETTER™ day: Follow me and see my daily posts on social media!

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Spring Into FITNESS

It's the time of year for personal growth and renewal—and creating new health goals is a great way to kick things off

Exercise is vital to healthy aging. Physical activity not only helps your body ward off premature aging, brittle bones and debilitating fractures, it also helps you feel less stiffness and soreness in your hips and knees. And as research shows, the majority of those aches and pains are the result of atrophy, not old age—which is great news! All it takes is a little exercise to keep you feeling amazing!

Exercise is also the most effective way to battle the bulge that sneaks up on us as we get older. Instead of trying diet after diet, none of which seem to work, add in some exercise to your life. Most diets fail because dieting destroys your metabolism. And in order to lose weight, you need to kick your metabolism into high gear, not turn it off.

If you really want to keep your youthful shape and feel your most confident in that tank top and shorts this spring, you need to jump-start your metabolism. The exercises on the following pages will help you do just that. A menopause belly doesn't have to be inevitable if you're age 50 or over. With the right moves—and motivation!—you can tone your hips, thighs, stomach and other areas that have started to sag.

But best of all, being fit feels fantastic! It's all thanks to those beta-endorphins, the body's natural pleasure chemicals, which kick in when you exercise. Working out can boost your self-esteem, too, as the more skill and stamina you develop, the better you'll feel about yourself and all that life has to offer!

BONUS!

Scan here to work out and get fit with Denise!

Get Moving TO STAY YOUNG!

The best thing you can do to feel more energized is exercise

It's no secret that exercising has a bevy of benefits, but did you know one of those is it helps you feel younger? Whether you want to improve your attention span, reduce stiffness or boost your mood, there's a workout for you. Check these out:

Want to improve your muscle tone and posture? Try some strength training. Stronger muscles are a good goal to aim for as we get older, since they help to promote good posture, can stave off illness and can give us a sense of resilience and strength! Try Denise's Spring Fitness Challenge on page 14 to build lovely, lean, beautiful muscle in 28 days! (Bonus: Muscle helps to burn more calories, too.)

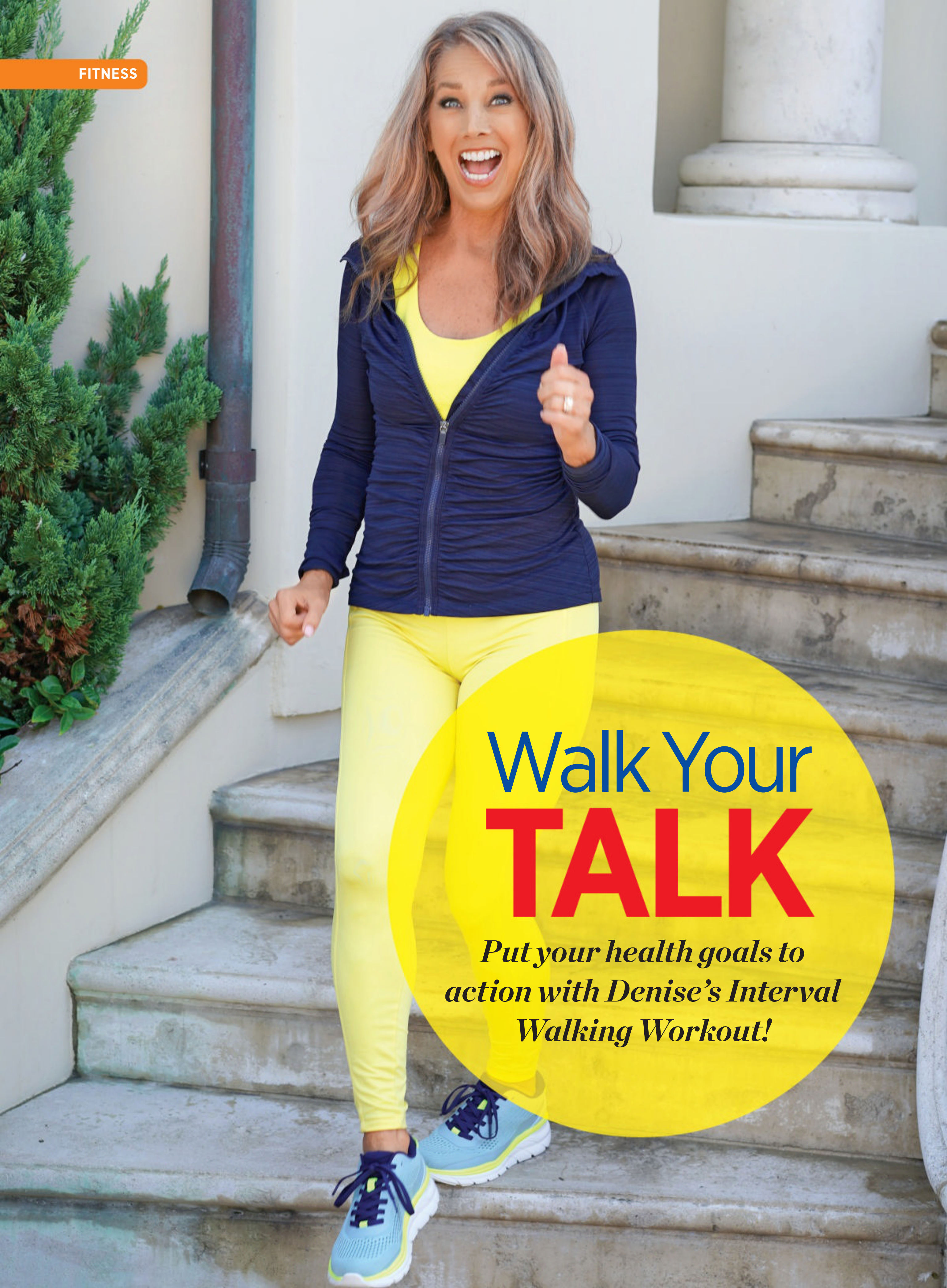
Looking for a natural glow? Exercise in the morning! Doing a light workout after you wake up is a great way to greet the day. Not only does it get you energized, frequent movement has also been linked to more supple, elastic skin in people over age 40. In addition to applying sunscreen, if you get moving every day your dedication to health and wellness will shine through your skin.

Feeling stiff? Try some yoga, Pilates or other stretching moves! Stretching helps to keep your muscles loose and promotes flexibility and balance, which are two things that can diminish with age. Try Denise's yoga and Pilates-inspired moves on page 18 and page 22 for an amazing low-impact workout.

Feeling forgetful? Jump on the treadmill or take a walk! Researchers have found that brain fog can be addressed with fitness. Denise suggests doing regular aerobic exercise to help tackle brain fog, so make regular walks, hikes or bike rides part of your feel-young goals.

Need a mood booster? Do some cardio. That "runner's high" that people talk about is produced by endorphins, and it can be achieved with any type of cardio, provided you work up a sweat. Give Denise's Interval Walking Workout on page 12 a try. Dancing is also a super fun way to work out and boost those endorphins.

And remember: Simply adding regular workouts to your life can help you sleep better, boost your metabolism to discourage weight gain, lower your stress levels, improve your heart health and circulation and so much more! So if one of your resolutions this year is to stay as healthy as you can, make exercise part of your daily routine.



Walk Your TALK

Put your health goals to action with Denise's Interval Walking Workout!

THE WARM-UP

Walk for 5 minutes at an easy to moderate pace (2.7 to 3.5 mph) to warm up your muscles and loosen your joints.

THE WORKOUT

For the next 20 minutes, alternate spurts of higher intensity walking and lower intensity walking. Make sure you have a watch to time yourself if you're walking outside. Start by doing 2 minutes of brisk walking (about 3.5 to 4.5 mph on the treadmill) or jogging. Your goal is to get your heart rate up! After 2 minutes, slow down to an easy walk (about 2.7 to 3.5 mph); continue at this pace for 2 minutes, so you can catch your breath and lower your heart rate. Continue doing 2 minutes of brisk walking followed by 2 minutes of easy walking until 20 minutes is up. You can vary the length of your intervals to increase the challenge. Cool down for 5 minutes.

WHAT YOU NEED
Walking shoes
Water bottle
Fitness tracker (optional)

Experiment with different strides to add a challenging change to your workout!

LONGER STRIDES:
Work the buttocks and the hips while stretching the calf muscles.

SHORTER STRIDES:
Taking smaller, shorter steps allows you to move more quickly, so you can get your heart rate up higher. Like a race walker, try to get your hips involved—and really pump those arms!

UPHILL:
Great for the backs of the legs and butt, as you use more muscle to climb.

DOWNHILL:
Equally effective, as you use your quads to control your body and fight the downward gravitational pull.

28-Day Spring Fitness Challenge

This series of short workouts targets every part of you—arms, abs, legs, butt and all—to help you rock an amazing body year-round!

Is your goal to flatten those abs? Whittle that waistline? Finally get rid of those underarm jiggles? And just look and feel your best this year in general? Denise has an awesome workout series for you!

Her 28-Day Spring Fitness Challenge is designed to tone, strengthen and lengthen every part of your body, from your shoulders to your calves. The best part about these workouts is how quick and effective they are. To make it easy, they're even divided into days of the week, so you know what workouts to do each day.

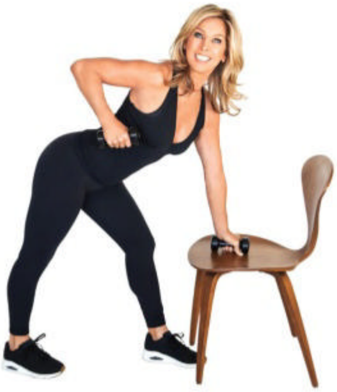
You'll be doing your body good, and as Denise always says, "It's never too late to start on the path to a healthier body!" So whether your goal is to feel confident about your body or to firm up to gain more energy and strong muscle tone, which is so important as we age, this effective exercise series can help. Give it a try, and remember: You're worth it!

Visit DeniseAustin.com to find hundreds of fun cardio and strength training workouts you can do anywhere, including walking exercises, dance routines, yoga and more!

MONDAY

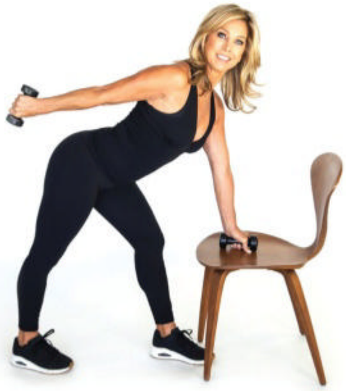
Strength Training Workout #1

UPPER BODY



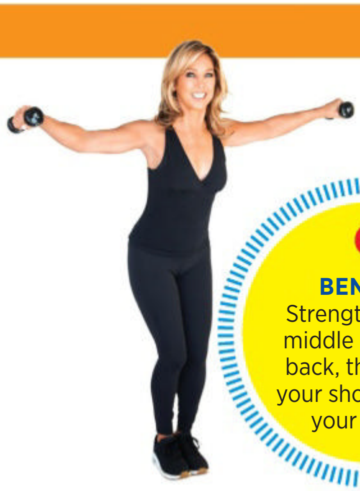
ONE-ARM ROW

Holding a dumbbell in your right hand, stand with your feet apart. Bend your knees slightly and keep your abdominals tight. Rest your left palm on your left thigh or use a chair or bench for support. Begin with your arm extended all the way down so you get a good stretch. Keeping your back flat, pull the weight up toward your armpit, then lower it. Do 8 to 12 reps. Then switch sides and repeat. Do two sets.



TRICEP KICKBACK

Hold a dumbbell in your right hand and stand with your left leg in front of your right, left knee slightly bent. Rest your left hand on a chair. Keeping abs tight and back flat, raise your right elbow until the upper part of your arm is almost parallel with the floor. Straighten your right arm, squeezing your tricep. Return your right hand to the starting position. Do 8 to 12 reps; switch sides and repeat. Do 2 sets.

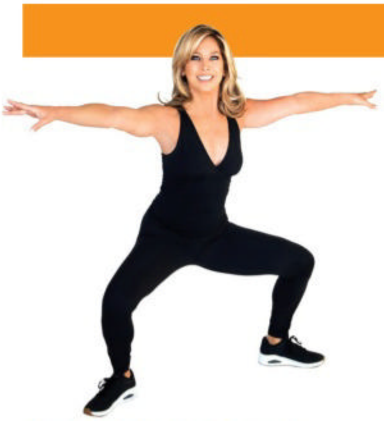


BENEFITS
Strengthens your middle and upper back, the sides of your shoulders and your triceps.

SIDE ARM RAISE

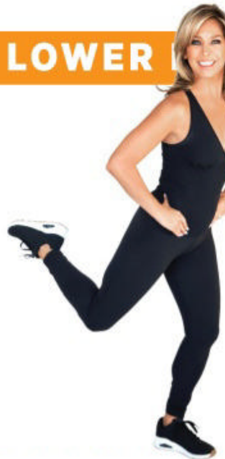
Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, abs tight, back straight and knees slightly bent, holding dumbbells in both hands. Start with your hands at your sides. Inhale as you lift your hands up to just above the shoulders, elbows bent only slightly. Exhale as you lower your hands back to your sides. Do 2 sets of 8 to 12 reps, resting briefly in between.

LOWER BODY



WIDE-STANCE SQUAT

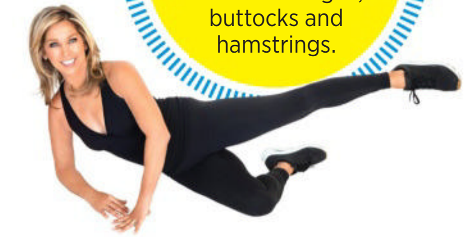
Stand with feet wider than your shoulders, arms out to your sides, toes turned out slightly. Bend knees and slowly sit back to lower your buttocks toward the floor, keeping your body weight over your heels. Your thighs should be as parallel to the floor as possible. Squeeze your buttocks as you straighten your legs to return to the starting position. Do 2 sets of 8 to 12 reps.



HAMSTRING CURL

In a standing position, slowly bend your left knee and extend your right leg behind you. Then slowly curl your right heel toward your buttocks. Be sure to keep your back straight, keep your abs tight and squeeze your buttocks together throughout the entire movement. Lower your right leg to the starting (straight leg) position. Do 2 sets of 8 to 12 reps on each side. Relax and repeat.

BENEFITS
Strengthens and tones your inner and outer thighs, buttocks and hamstrings.

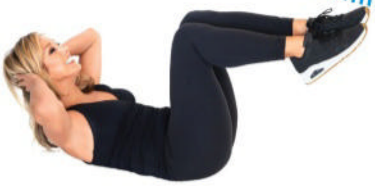


OUTER-THIGH TRIMMER

Lie on your right side. Your head, shoulders and hips should form one straight line. Bend your right leg behind you, placing your left hand on the floor in front of you for balance. Keeping your left leg straight and your foot relaxed, slowly raise your leg. Then lower it back to the floor. Do 2 sets of 8 to 12 reps, resting briefly in between sets. Switch sides and repeat.

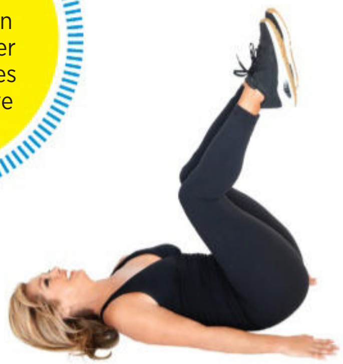
ABS & BACK

BENEFITS
Firms your main ab muscle, lower abs and obliques to minimize love handles.



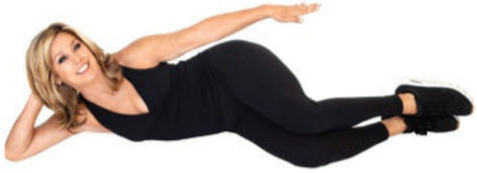
AB CRUNCH

Lie on your back, knees bent, feet on the floor. Rest your head in your hands, keeping the neck and shoulders relaxed. Press your lower back firmly into the floor. Exhale as you contract your abs to slowly lift your shoulders and feet off the floor; press your belly button toward your spine. Slowly lower your shoulders and feet to the floor. Do 2 sets of 8 to 12 reps.



LOWER-TUMMY TIGHTENER

Lie on your back, palms down, just beneath your buttocks. Lift legs off the floor, bend them slightly and cross your ankles. Exhale as you contract your abs to lift your bent knees toward your chest. Your knees should stay bent at the same angle throughout the entire exercise. Lower your legs slightly back down and repeat. Do 2 sets of 8 to 12 reps.



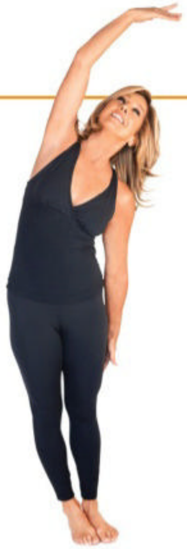
OBLIQUE CURL

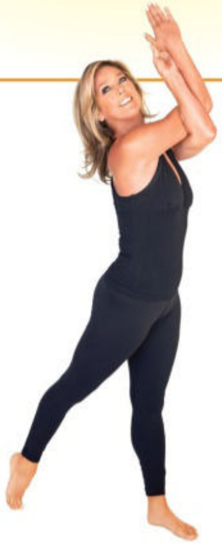
Lie on the floor on your right side with knees bent. Keep your back straight; there should be no arch in your back at all. Place your left hand out to the side and your right hand behind your head for support. Exhale as you lift your right shoulder blade off the floor, and tighten the sides of your waistline. Relax as you lower back to the floor. Do 2 sets of 8 to 12 reps.

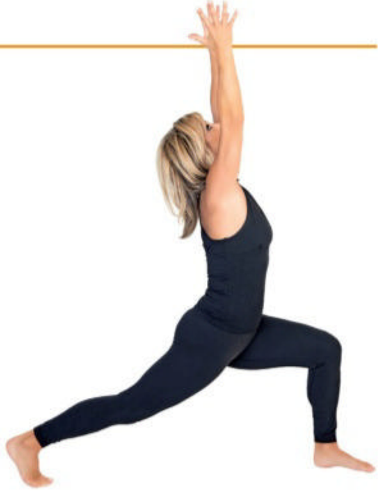
TUESDAY

Flexibility & Balance

Workout #1: Yoga



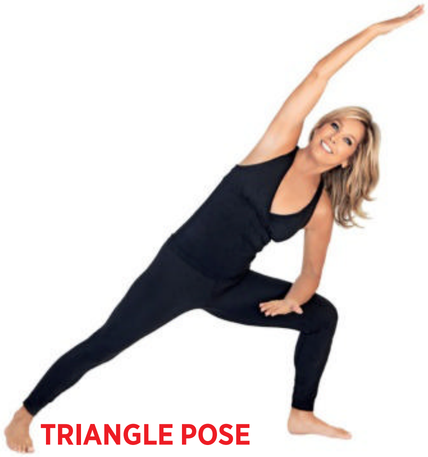




SIDE BODY STRETCH
Stand with your feet close together. Walk your left hand down the side of your leg, reaching as far down with your fingertips as is comfortable. Extend your right arm up and out over your head, palm facing down. Hold pose for 10 seconds, then repeat on the other side. Try 3 sets. This stretch elongates the entire side of the body, opens up the hip and strengthens through the trunk (abs and back).

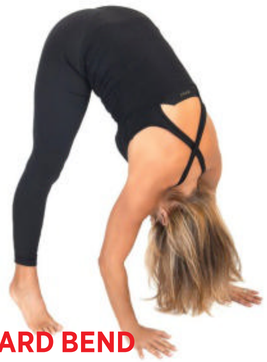
EAGLE POSE
Stand with right leg behind the left. Wrap your arms around each other so the palms eventually touch, with thumbs hooked together and fingertips aligned. Pull your elbows away from the body to feel a stretch across your upper back. Twist to the left and flex the right leg. Hold for 15 seconds, then repeat with the left leg in back. This stretch feels great in your shoulders, back and chest.

WARRIOR POSE
Stand with hands on hips, then step feet apart so ankles are in line with wrists. Turn left foot out 90 degrees and rotate right foot so toes point left at a 45-degree angle. Bend your left knee to 90 degrees. Keeping the right leg straight, rotate the upper body to face left. Look straight ahead, then extend both arms over head. Hold for 3 breaths. Return to standing position and repeat on the other side.



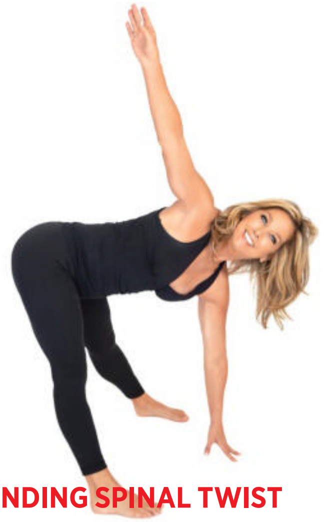
TRIANGLE POSE

Stand with legs 3 or 4 feet apart. Extend arms straight out to the sides at shoulder height, palms facing down. Turn left foot out, away from body. Keeping right leg straight, bend left leg, resting left arm on left thigh for support. To give neck a good stretch, turn head to look at the ceiling. Take 3 deep breaths. Return to the starting position and repeat on the opposite side.



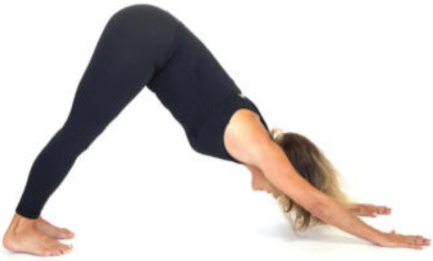
FORWARD BEND

Spread feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart. Keeping knees loose, bend forward from the hips, extend the tailbone into the air, and stretch the spine out from that point. This pose relieves back tension. Your goal is to flatten your back and then lean forward. Use a prop (a block or chair) if needed. Hold 15 to 20 seconds, working up to a minute over time with practice.



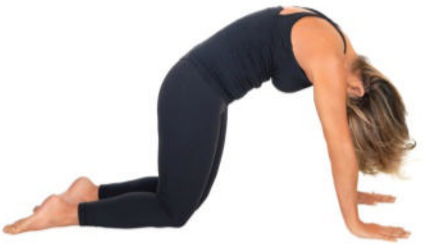
STANDING SPINAL TWIST

Begin with feet wider than shoulder-width apart, feet pointing forward. A soft bend in the knees to alleviate too much tension in the hamstrings is fine. Bend forward, reaching your left arm toward the floor and your right arm straight up over your head. Hold pose for 10 seconds, then slowly come back to the standing position and repeat on the other side.



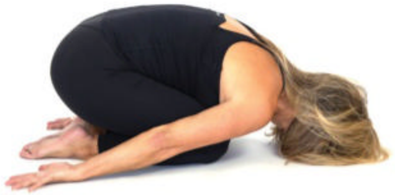
DOWNWARD-FACING DOG

Kneel on all fours, knees directly below hips and hands slightly in front of shoulders. Keeping palms on the floor, lift hips and buttocks up toward the ceiling until legs are straight. Your body should form an inverted "V." Now try to slowly and gently press your heels down, feeling the stretch in your calves. Hold the pose for 3 deep breaths. Return to the kneeling position, then repeat twice.



CAT STRETCH

This is a great way to strengthen your abs and keep your back flexible. Kneel on all fours, being careful not to let your belly sag. Inhale as you keep your back flat, chin and chest lifted slightly upward. Now exhale as you slowly roll up your back, pull in your belly button and tighten your abdominal muscles.



CHILD'S POSE

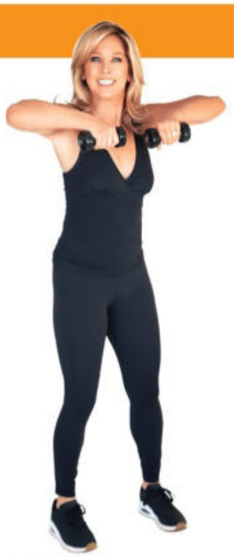
Start in an upright kneeling position, then sit back on your heels. Keeping your buttocks on your heels, slowly bend forward and lower your head to the floor until you're curled up like a sleeping child, forehead resting on the floor, arms by sides, palms facing up. Take 5 deep breaths and relax! This pose is designed to rejuvenate and nurture.

WEDNESDAY

Strength Training Workout #2

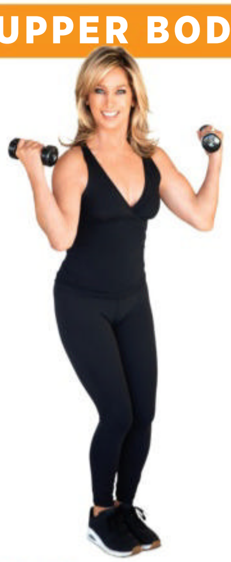
UPPER BODY

BENEFITS
Tones upper back, shoulders, biceps and chest muscles for a better bustline.



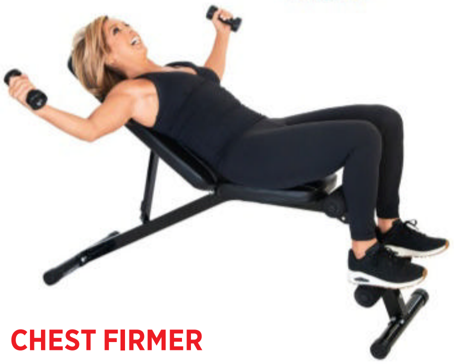
UPRIGHT ROW

Hold two dumbbells in front of you, palms facing in, and stand with knees slightly bent, abs tight. Inhale and squeeze your shoulder blades together as you raise the weights up toward your shoulders. Arms should form a V shape. Exhale as you slowly lower your arms to starting position. Do 2 sets of 8 to 12 reps, resting briefly between each set.



BICEP CURL

Stand with knees slightly bent, back flat and abs tight. Using an underhand grip, hold a dumbbell in each hand in front of your thighs. Exhale as you slowly raise the weights toward your shoulders, bending arms at the elbows. Hold momentarily, then return hands to the starting position. Do 2 sets of 8 to 12 reps, resting briefly after each.

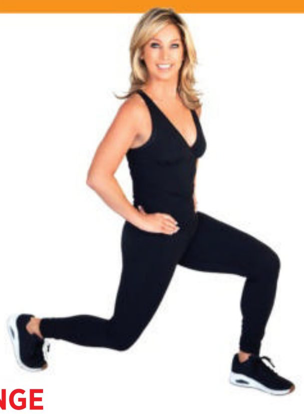


CHEST FIRMER

Sit back on a weight bench with knees bent and feet on the footrest. Hold dumbbells in hands; extend arms above chest, palms facing in. Slowly lower arms out to the sides, keeping them bent at the same angle throughout the movement. Squeeze chest as you return arms to the starting position. Do 2 sets of 8 to 12 reps, resting briefly between sets.

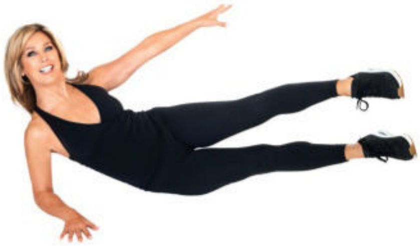
LOWER BODY

BENEFITS
Strengthens and tones buttocks, inner and outer thighs, and hamstrings.



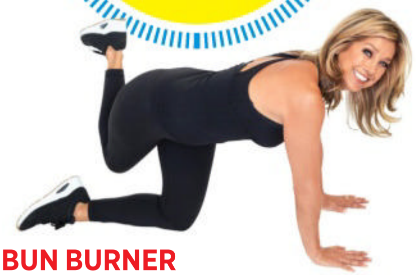
LUNGE

Stand, feet together, then take a giant step forward with your left foot. Keeping weight over back toes and front heel, bend both knees to lower yourself toward the ground; front knee should be directly above ankle. Keep back straight throughout the move. Return to a standing position. Do 2 sets of 8 to 12 reps, resting briefly between sets; switch legs and repeat.



INNER-THIGH FIRMER

Lie on the floor on your left side. Your head, shoulders and hips should form a straight line. Keeping your legs straight, slowly raise your legs about 8 inches off the floor. Release your bottom leg down to the floor, then bring it back up to meet your top leg. Feel your inner thighs working on the up motion. Do 2 sets of 8 to 12 reps, then switch sides and repeat.

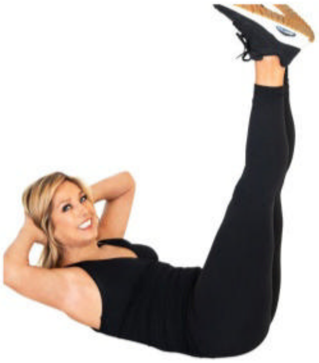


BUN BURNER

Start on all fours, keeping your back straight, hips square and abdominal muscles tight. Raise your right leg up, keeping it bent at a 90-degree angle. Your thigh should be parallel to the floor. Now cross it behind you over your left knee, then back to the starting position. Do 2 sets of 8 to 12 reps, then switch legs and repeat.

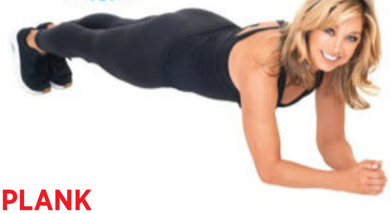
ABS & BACK

BENEFITS
Firms stomach, entire back muscle and abdominal muscles.



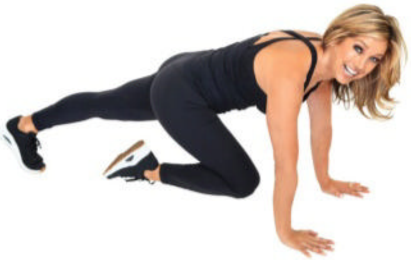
TOTAL TUMMY TIGHTENER

Lie on your back, elevate your feet and place your hands behind your head. Then lift your head and shoulders off the floor and, at the same time, pulse your hips up off the floor to also work the lower end of your abs. Pulse for 15 to 20 reps. Make sure the small of your back stays down against the floor.



PLANK

Start in a modified push-up position, with your elbows on the floor directly below your shoulders, hips lifted slightly and abdominals tight. Elongate your abs and back by lifting your pelvis. Hold the position for 30 seconds. Rest and repeat. Focus on the core of your body, your torso and abs.

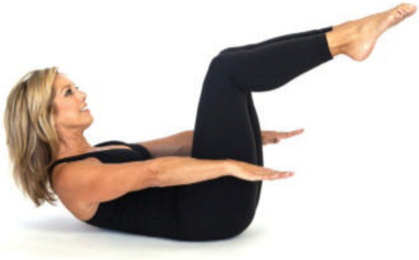


BACK STRENGTHENER

Begin in a push-up position, with hands beneath your shoulders and abdominal muscles tight. Pull one knee in and reach it slightly toward your opposite shoulder. Return to the starting position. Repeat with opposite leg. Continue alternating legs for 8 to 12 reps.

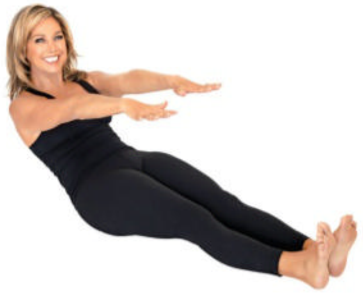
THURSDAY

Flexibility & Balance Workout #2: Pilates



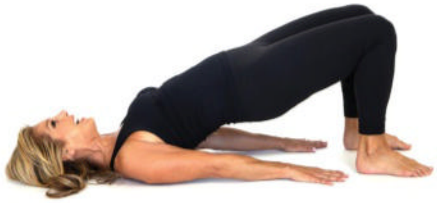
THE HUNDRED

Lie on your back, then pull knees in and place arms over head. Gently pull the chin forward to lift up head, neck and shoulders. Bring arms down and reach fingers toward toes. Lift arms 2 to 3 inches off the floor, then pump them up and down. Inhale for 5 counts and exhale for 5 counts. Do this 5 times.



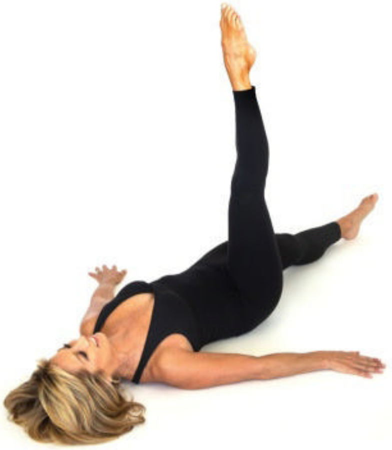
THE ROLL-UP

Lie on your back with arms stretched overhead. Engage abdominal muscles as you slowly roll your upper body up and then forward into an upright position, lifting arms toward the ceiling. Continue slowly reaching fingertips forward toward toes. Focus on using your abs. Your spine creates a C curve in the lower back by pulling your navel in. Slowly roll down, one vertebra at a time. Relax and repeat this move twice.



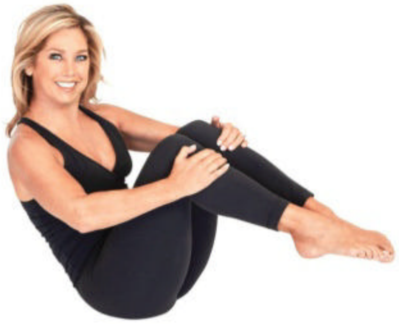
BRIDGE

Lie on the floor on your back with knees bent, feet flat on the floor directly under knees, which should be hip-width apart. Lift hips straight up so your body is supported by your shoulders and feet. Make sure shoulders are pulled down and neck is relaxed. Hold for 10 seconds. Lower and repeat. (Use caution if you have a bad neck.)



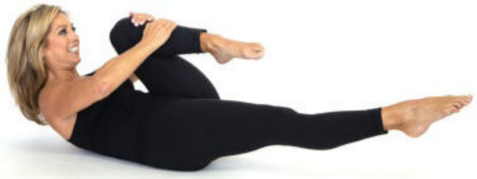
LEG CIRCLES

Lie on your back, arms by your side, legs extended straight. Hug your right knee into your chest, then straighten your leg so it extends up, forming a right angle with your body. Lower your right foot to your left, then swing it down until it's 6 inches from your left leg. Continue swinging it back up toward the ceiling. Repeat the circle 5 times, then reverse.



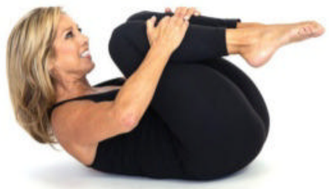
ROLLING LIKE A BALL

Sit, knees bent, buttocks close to your heels. Grasp your lower legs and hug them. Bring your chin into your chest, curving your back to curl up like a ball. Inhale slowly as you roll back until your shoulders touch the floor, pulling your belly button in. Exhale as you roll up to a seated position. Repeat 6 times.



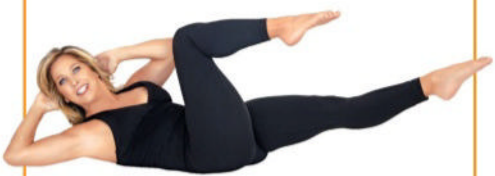
SINGLE-LEG STRETCH

Lie on your back, legs extended, arms by your side. Inhale slowly and bring your chin to your chest, lifting your head and shoulders while bending your left knee into your chest. Place hands on your left shin to hold your knee to your chest for 3 counts. Switch legs and repeat, alternating 10 times. If you are experiencing neck problems, place a pillow or rolled-up towel under your neck for extra support.



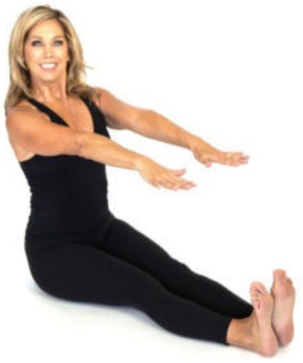
DOUBLE-LEG STRETCH

Lie with knees pulled into chest. Inhale and stretch your body, extending your legs out and your arms over your head. Keeping your back flat, reach your chin into your chest while raising your arms. Exhale, sweeping the arms around by your side. Draw your legs into your chest; hug your knees and hold. Then stretch your limbs out, back in, and hug your knees and hold. Repeat 3 to 6 times.



CRISSCROSS

Lie on your back. Pull knees into chest and chin forward. Rest your head in your hands. Lift your upper body (head, neck and shoulders) off the floor. Exhale as you extend your left leg out straight while twisting your left elbow toward your right knee. Inhale as you return to the center. Repeat, this time extending the right leg out straight and twisting with the right elbow. Continue alternating legs 12 times total (6 on each side).



SPINE STRETCH FORWARD

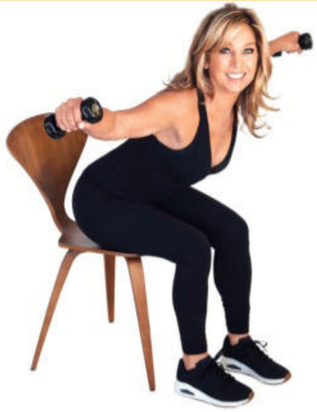
Sit up with legs extended, feet shoulder-width apart. Extend arms in front as if sleepwalking. Tighten abs as you lengthen spine and lift chest. Starting with your head, roll the upper torso down as you pull abs in. Keeping arms elevated, continue rolling down until the spine forms a "C" (as if you're rounding yourself over a beach ball). Exhale. Inhale as you roll back up and sit tall. Exhale. Repeat 3 times.

FRIDAY

Strength Training Workout #3

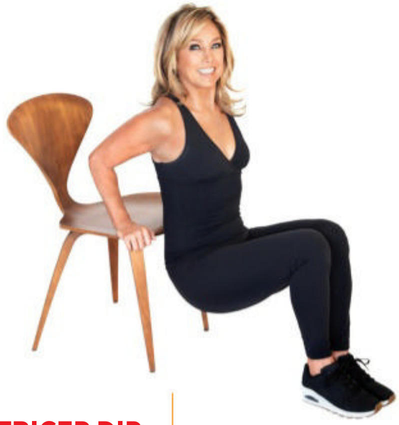
UPPER BODY

BENEFITS
Strengthens and firms upper back muscles, triceps and chest muscles.



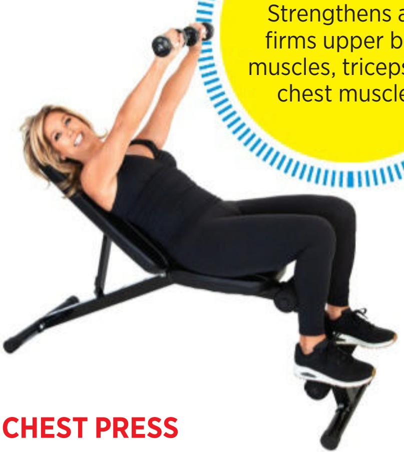
UPPER BACK FIRMER

Holding a dumbbell in each hand, sit on a chair with feet flat on the floor. Lean forward so your chest is near your thighs. Squeeze your shoulder blades together as you slowly lift your arms straight out to the sides, leading with your pinkie fingers. Return to the starting position. Make sure that the movement is slow and deliberate; don't swing the weights. Do 2 sets of 8 to 12 reps, resting briefly between sets.



TRICEP DIP

Place hands on the edge of a sturdy chair, fingers facing you, knees bent, feet flat on the floor. Shift your buttocks forward so your bottom is in front of the chair. Bend your elbows to slowly lower buttocks toward the floor, keeping your back straight and close to the chair. Straighten your arms to lift buttocks back up to chair height, feeling the workout in the backs of your arms.
Do 2 sets of 8 to 12 reps.

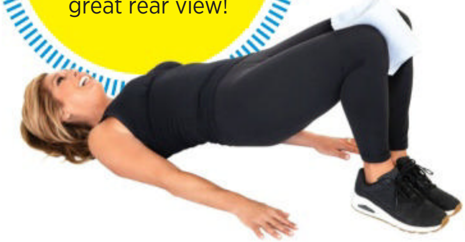


CHEST PRESS

Lie back on a weight bench with knees bent and feet flat on the footrest. Holding a dumbbell in each hand, slowly bend arms so that elbows are parallel to the shoulders. Push the weights straight up so that your arms are extended directly over your chest, keeping your lower back pressed firmly into the bench. Slowly lower to the starting position. Do 2 sets of 8 to 12 reps, resting briefly between sets.

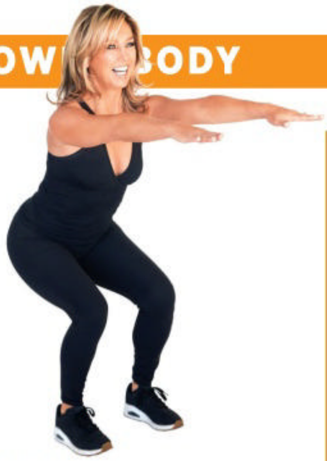
LOWER BODY

BENEFITS
Strengthens and lifts your thighs and buttocks for a great rear view!



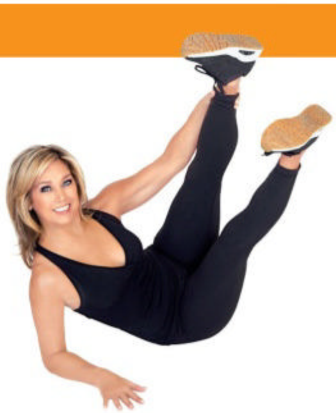
BOTTOMS UP

Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor, arms by your sides. Squeeze your buttocks and tighten your abdominals as you lift your buttocks off the floor (about 3 to 6 inches) by tilting your pelvis up. Hold for a few seconds, then lower down one vertebra at a time. For better results, put a towel between your knees. Do 2 sets of 8 reps, resting briefly between sets.



POWER SQUAT

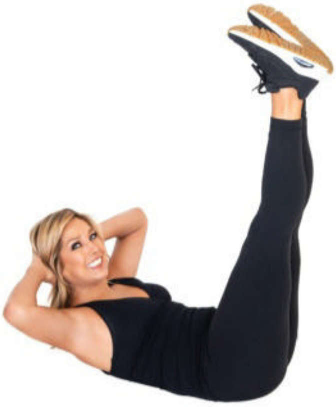
Extend your arms and stand with your feet just wider than hip-width apart, arms outstretched, parallel to the floor. Bend knees and slowly sit back to lower your buttocks toward the floor, keeping your body weight over your heels. Thighs should be as parallel to the floor as possible. Squeeze your buttocks as you straighten your legs to return to start. Do 2 sets of 8 to 12 reps.



INNER THIGH TONER

Lie on your side, lift up your top leg and hold it in place. Then lift and pulse the bottom leg toward the top leg. Pulse 5 times and then lower leg to the floor. Switch sides and repeat.

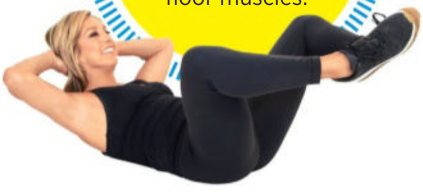
ABS & BACK



WAISTLINE TRIMMER

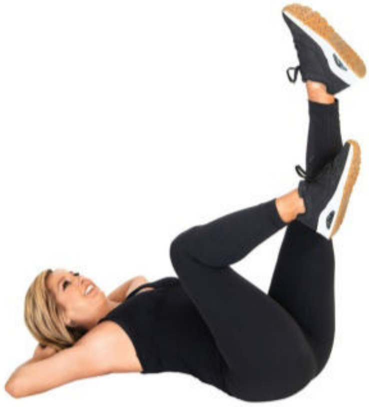
Lie on your back with your hands behind your head. Elevate your feet. If your hamstrings are too tight, bend your knees. Use your abs to lift your chest and left shoulder just off the floor and twist the left elbow toward your knee. Do 2 sets of 8 reps to one side, then switch. Concentrate on one side of the waistline at a time.

BENEFITS
Strengthens your obliques, lower abs and pelvic floor muscles.



LOWER AB STRENGTHENER

Lie on your back with knees bent out to the sides, soles of your feet together. Press the small of your back to the floor and use your abs to lift your feet, head and shoulders 6 to 8 inches off the floor. Hold for 3 to 5 seconds, then lower. Do 10 reps. Keep abs tight as you press the belly button in.



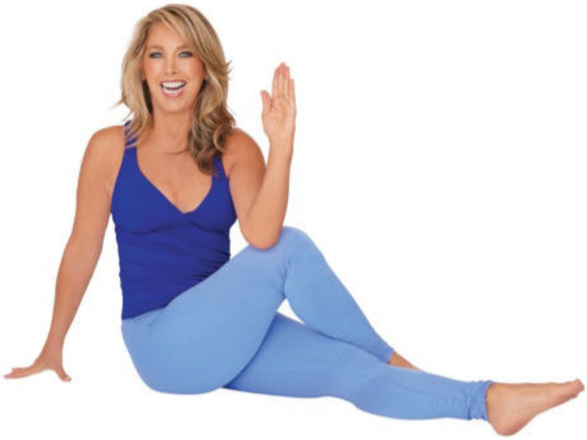
REVERSE CRUNCH

Lie on your back, one knee bent at 90 degrees and the other leg extended straight up. Exhale and use your lower abs to lift your hips off the floor. With hips raised, pull bent knee in close to your chest, keeping the other leg straight. Inhale as you release and lower your hips. Repeat with the other leg. Alternate legs for 15 reps.

SATURDAY

Incorporate these 8 back and hip exercises into your weekly routine to help these areas stay strong and flexible!

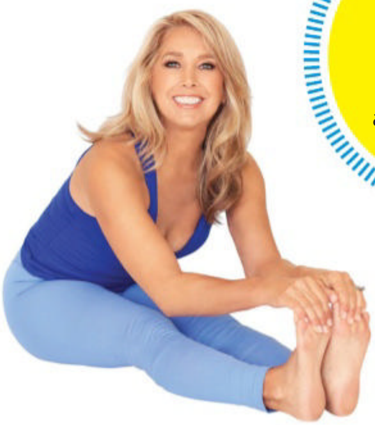
BACK



SPINAL TWIST

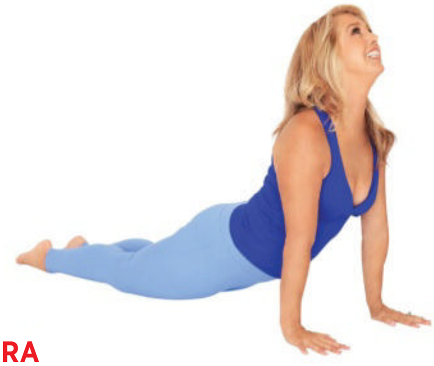
Sit with legs extended in front, feet flexed. Bend right knee, then lift right foot up and place it on the left side of your left knee. Bending your left arm, place left elbow on the outside of your right knee and turn upper body to the right. Keep shoulders down as you twist spine farther to the right. Pushing your chest forward will further lengthen the spine. Hold pose for 3 deep breaths. Return to the starting position and repeat on the opposite side.

BENEFITS
Stretching helps keep your back muscles loose and your spine in alignment.



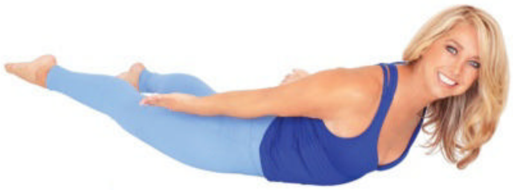
FORWARD BEND

Sit with legs extended straight in front. Keeping your back straight and your abdominals pulled in, reach both hands toward your toes as far as possible. Feel a gentle stretch all the way from your hamstrings to the top of your neck. As you stretch, you'll be increasing blood flow to your entire vertebral column. Hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds; release and repeat.



COBRA

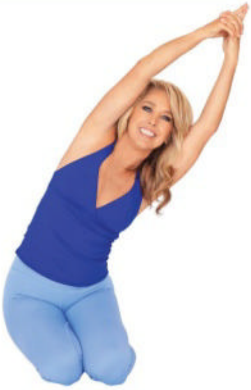
Lie facedown with hands under shoulders, palms facing down, fingers pointed forward. Exhale and tighten buttocks as you lift upper body off the floor, dropping hips and lengthening forward, using rear muscles to push up. Hold for 3 deep breaths, then lower to starting position.



SUPERMAN

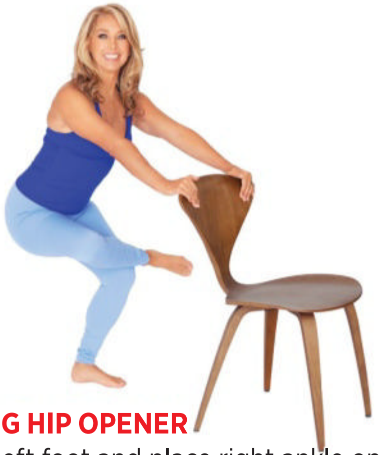
Lie on belly with arms and legs extended and feet 6 inches apart. Squeeze buttocks as you raise head, arms and legs an inch off the floor. Circle arms out to sides and then behind you, palms facing up. Look down to keep neck in alignment and anchor hips to the floor. Hold for 5 seconds; release. Repeat 2 times.

HIPS



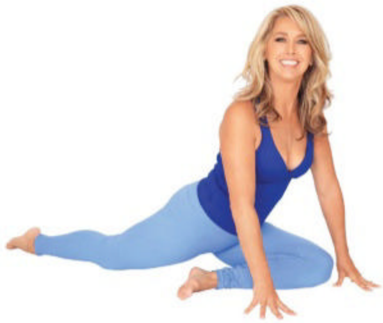
SIDE BEND

Kneel on the floor with feet tucked under bottom. With arms extended straight up overhead, clasp hands together and stretch upward. Bend body slightly to the right and take 3 deep breaths. Return to an upright position, then bend to the left. Take 3 deep breaths and repeat.



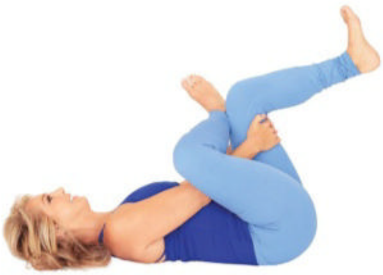
STANDING HIP OPENER

Stand on left foot and place right ankle on left thigh, right knee bent out to the side. Keeping your knees bent, bend at the hips slightly and push buttocks back, placing both hands on leg. You can also use a chair or wall for balance. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds. Switch sides and repeat.



HIP STRETCH

Sit on the floor with right leg stretched behind you and left leg folded in front of you. Place both hands on the floor for balance. Keep your hips down as you lift your chest and let your whole spine lengthen. Hold for 10 seconds. Switch sides and repeat.



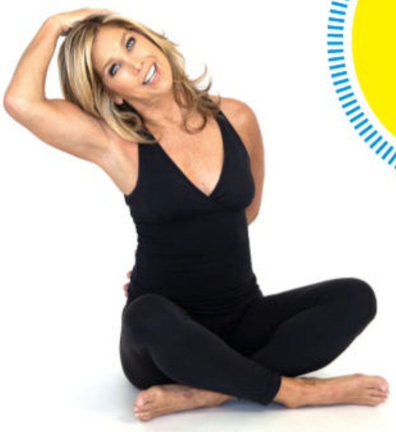
OUTER HIP RELIEVER

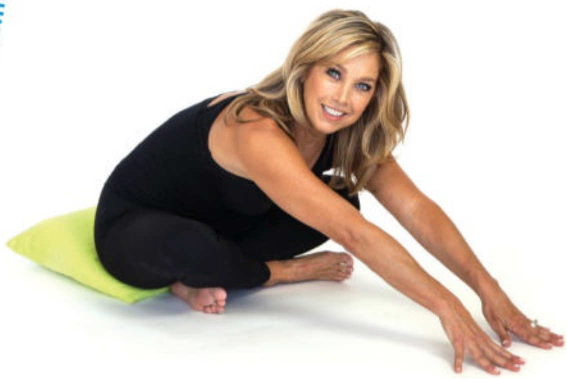
Lie with knees bent, then cross right ankle over left thigh. Raise left foot off the floor and place both hands behind left thigh for support. For a deeper stretch, gently pull left thigh toward you as you use right elbow to press right thigh gently. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds. Switch sides and repeat.

HEALING STRETCHES

Start or end your day with these relaxing moves!

BENEFITS
Releases stress and tension from the neck and shoulders.



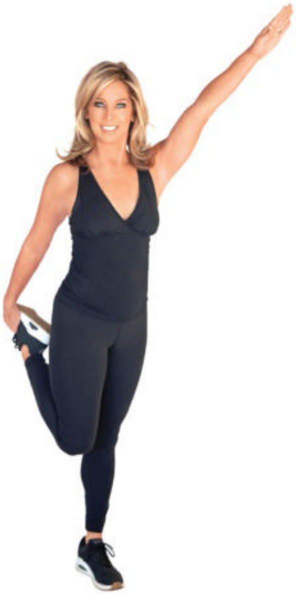


HEAD TILT

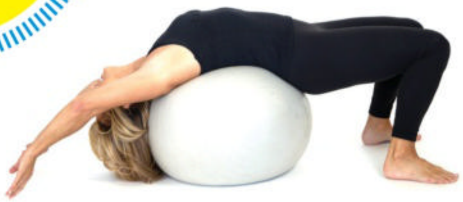
Relax in a comfortable seated position, with right arm resting by your side. With your left fingertips, gently tilt and pull your head sideways or toward your shoulder. Do the same with your right fingertips. Then, with both hands, gently pull your head forward away from your body. Hold each position for 15 seconds.

BEST BUNS STRETCH

Sit with legs crossed in front of you and reach in front with both hands. Feel the stretch. Now gently walk fingertips to the left side, over your knee, and then to the right. You should feel the stretch in your right buttock cheek and then your left buttock cheek. A pillow will help to cushion your tailbone but is optional. Hold for 10 to 15 seconds in each direction.



BENEFITS
The chest stretch below will give you a natural breast lift!

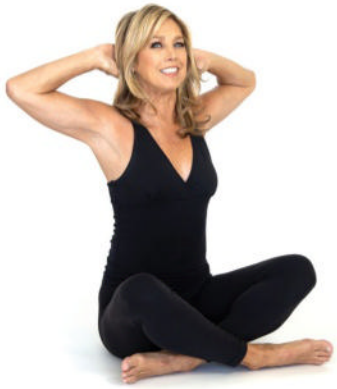


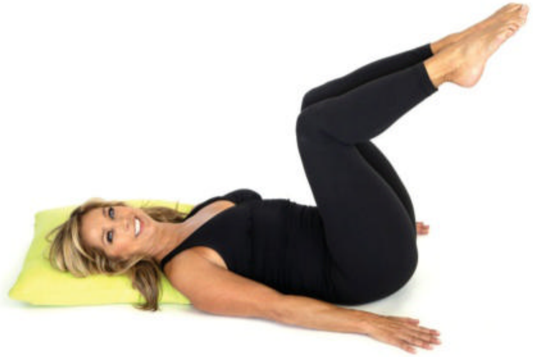
QUAD STRETCH

Stand with your feet together and hold on to a wall or chair for balance. Bend your right knee behind you and hold your foot with your right hand. Gently pull your heel toward your buttocks and feel the stretch in the front of your thigh. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds. Switch legs and repeat.

ABDOMINAL STRETCH

Lie on your back or on an exercise ball with your arms stretched overhead. Stretch your hands away from your toes to lengthen your abdominal region. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds. Try a rolled towel or exercise ball under your back for an extra stretch to create more length through the abdominals.





CHEST STRETCH

Clasp your fingers behind your neck. Pull your elbows back as far as you can. Hold for 10 seconds. Keeping your fingers clasped, try to bring your elbows together in front of you. Hold for 5 seconds. Release your hands and relax for 5 seconds. Repeat the sequence 3 times.

BACK RELAXER

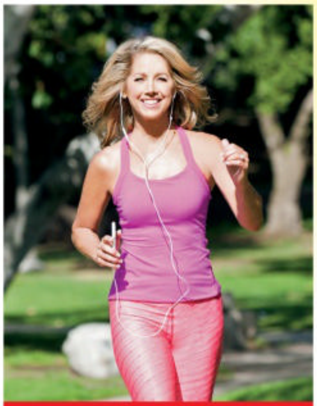
Lie down with a pillow underneath your neck and shoulders, and let your upper body totally relax into the floor. Gently bring your knees in toward your chest while holding the backs of your legs. Hold this position for about 30 seconds, then gently rock your knees slowly to one side, then to the other.

DENISE'S DO'S!

As you do each move, be sure that your body stays in proper alignment; don't get sloppy. Each movement should be smooth and controlled. Quality is more important than quantity, so opt for a single good stretch over 10 half-hearted ones.

PUTTING IT ALL

This sample week of age-defying workouts mixes cardio



"This is a sample workout plan for 'daily doers,'" says Denise. If you are new to working out or coming back from time off, be sure to start slowly and gradually work up to a full routine. Follow this suggested weekly routine, along with a healthful diet, every day for 28 days, and you will see results!

And remember: It's always a good idea to consult your physician before starting any exercise plan—especially if you have never exercised before; you are overweight, a smoker or over age 60; and/or you have a chronic health condition such as cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, kidney or liver disease, arthritis or osteoporosis.

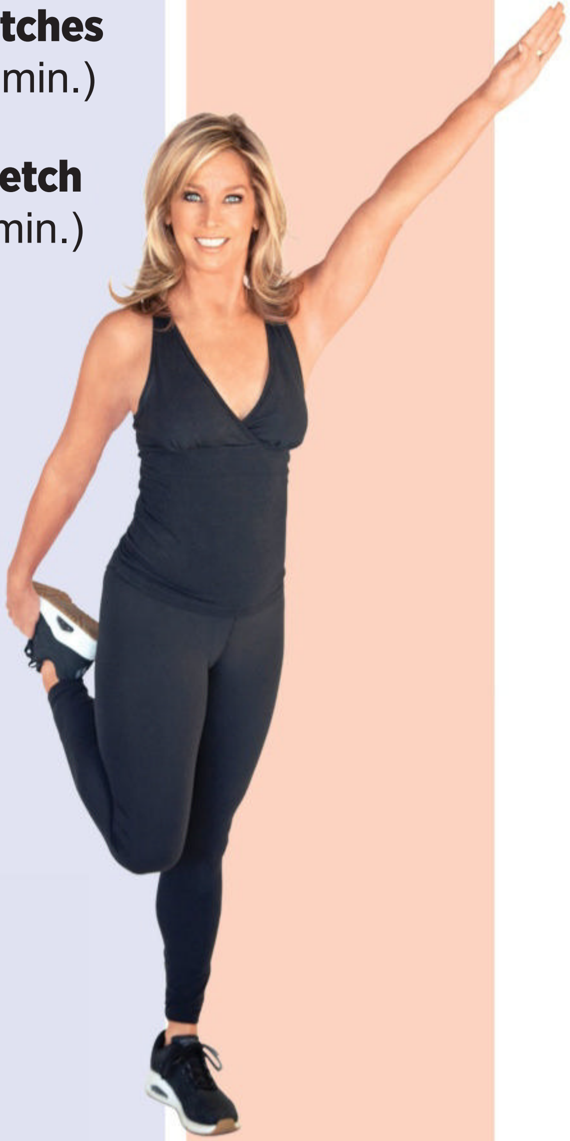
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Walking Workout (30 min.)	**Walking Workout** (30 min.)	**Walking Workout** (30 min.)
Strength Training Workout #1 (30 min.)	**Yoga** (30 min.)	**Strength Training Workout #2** (30 min.)
Stretch (5 min.)	**Stretch** (5 min.)	**Stretch** (5 min.)

TOGETHER

with strength training and flexibility exercises for amazing results!

Denise has even more exercises to help you get fit and feel great! Visit *DeniseAustin.com* to learn more.

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Walking Workout (30 min.)	**Walking Workout** (30 min.)	**Walking Workout** (30 min.)	**Stretch** (5 min.)
Pilates (30 min.)	**Strength Training Workout #3** (30 min.)	**Back and Hip Stretches** (30 min.)	
Stretch (5 min.)	**Stretch** (5 min.)	**Stretch** (5 min.)	



Fresh for SPRING

Why it's a no-brainer to eat fruits and vegetables that are growing now

Spring has sprung, and with it comes a bounty of fresh produce! There are artichokes and arugula, and asparagus and beets. We can't forget bok choy and carrots, and sweet peas and mangoes, either. And who doesn't love the versatile potato? These are just the tip of the spring produce iceberg.

Why should we care about seasonal eating, though? Well, for starters, the difference between a piece of fruit that is fresh and one that has been chilled and held in a warehouse before it gets to you is crystal clear in our eyes. When produce is fresher, you get more of its nutrients, making it healthier for you. It has had time to ripen in the sun for longer, which likewise makes it tastier. "The wonderful flavors of freshly grown fruit and vegetables make it my favorite reason to eat seasonally," says Denise. "After all, we're more likely to eat what's good for us when it tastes great, so that's reason alone to eat what's in season!"

As a bonus, it's also more cost-effective to eat seasonally because of the simple law of supply and demand. Produce that's in season is generally more abundant and, therefore, more affordable.

What's harvested by season can vary by location, of course. For a look into your local seasonal harvest, you can go to your farmers market or do a quick Google search for local and seasonal produce. For now, check out this section for Denise's nutrition tips, healthy meal ideas that incorporate spring fruits and veggies, and more.

> “*You* hold the power to decide whether you’re going to be a quitter or a go-getter!”

BONUS!

Scan here for more nutrition tips from Denise!

10 Heart HEALTHY FOODS

Add these nutritional all-stars to your diet today

Heart disease makes up nearly a third of all deaths worldwide, so we must do all we can to make our hearts healthier. There's no better time than now to start adding in the best foods to help promote healthy blood pressure, cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

Maximize your diet with these 10 superfoods for heart health:

1 **AVOCADO:** It's high in monounsaturated fat, the kind that doesn't clog your arteries. Research shows that avocados may protect against heart disease by lowering LDL cholesterol levels. A plus: Monounsaturated fats also help make your skin softer and your hair shinier.

2 **BLUEBERRIES:** These super berries contain phytonutrients called anthocyanins, which have been linked to a lower risk of heart disease and cancer.

3 **CHIA SEEDS:** One of Denise's favorite food discoveries is chia seeds. One tablespoon of chia seeds has more calcium than a glass of milk, more omega-3s than salmon and more antioxidants than blueberries.

4 EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL: The fat found in olive oil is monounsaturated, which, again, is the healthiest type you can give to your body. Monounsaturated fats promote heart health and can help lower the risk of heart attacks and heart disease.

5 GARLIC: It has been shown to help reduce cholesterol and blood pressure, so use it liberally in your cooking!

6 GREEN TEA: Green tea provides EGCG, a polyphenol that may help to lower cholesterol and fight inflammation. More good news: There are so many varieties to choose from when it comes to green tea, you would be amazed! Enjoy a cup with your breakfast or with an afternoon snack.

7 KALE AND SPINACH: These are staples in Denise's kitchen, and for good reason: Not only are they highly nutritious, but they provide vitamin K and nitrates, which can help reduce blood pressure and improve arterial function. So eat up more dark leafy greens for your heart!

8 NUTS: According to the Mayo Clinic, nuts such as walnuts and almonds can be part of a heart-healthy diet—they help to lower LDL cholesterol levels and inflammation. What else makes nuts a heart-healthy choice? They contain unsaturated fats, omega-3s, fiber, vitamin E and plant sterols.

9 SALMON, TUNA AND SARDINES: Omega-3s found in fish such as salmon can help protect against heart attack, stroke and diseases linked to inflammation. Denise tries to eat salmon at least once a week and always buys eggs that are enriched with omega-3s.

10 SOY: Studies suggest that soy can help reduce the risk of breast cancer, osteoporosis and heart disease, as well as minimize hot flashes for women experiencing perimenopause and menopause.

> “Maintaining a successful diet means recognizing that it’s a long-term solution—not a quick fix.”

Easy as 1-2-3 MEALS

Learn how to make simple—and delectable—dishes from pantry staples

Making dinner may seem really daunting at times, but it doesn't have to be—dining at home can be both painless and delicious! When you make your own meals, you're also tapping into your creative side, you're saving more money compared to when you dine out, and you have complete control over what you put into your meals, so you can be healthier while still enjoying every bite. All you need are a few pantry staples and you can be on your way to good eating.

In the following pages, Denise shares some of her favorite breakfast, lunch and dinner recipes from her member-exclusive 10-Week Plan. (Visit DeniseAustin.com to learn more!). "I tried to choose recipes that rely on pantry and refrigerator staples so they are easier for you to make, but I have also offered some swapping suggestions in case you don't have some of these ingredients," Denise explains.

But first, here are some cooking and eating tips, as well as pantry staples to have handy, before you get started:

Make cooking fun for you and your family. Give the kids chores such as peeling a carrot or helping to wash the veggies. If you have teenagers, give them a side dish to prepare. The more everyone is involved, the easier and more fun it will be.

Set the table. It may seem like a small thing, but sitting down together to a proper meal can give your day more structure. If you have children, task them with creating place cards for each person. If you are dining alone, light a candle for some ambience. Little things can make a big difference!

Give yourself a break. If you aren't feeling up to making a full meal, then snack or graze. Grab some homemade (or store-bought!) bean dip and enjoy it with some veggies, or grab some nuts or cheese and crackers.

And now, on to my recipes! Flip the page for three easy, healthy recipes that are made with fridge and pantry staples. I hope you love them as much as my family and I do!

1. BREAKFAST: Fruity Yogurt Parfait

Time: 5 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

Creamy Greek yogurt and cereal are combined together with nuts, chia seeds and fresh fruit for this easy breakfast (or snack). It's super easy to sub out ingredients, too. Just use whatever fruit you have on hand, and cottage cheese can stand in for yogurt. If you don't have flaxseed or chia seeds, no worries. You'll still be getting plenty of healthy nutrients without them. If you have kids, put all the ingredients into little bowls and serve like a buffet to get them involved in the process. For adults, Denise suggests choosing a cereal that's high in fiber.

INGREDIENTS

- **1 (6-oz.) container plain Greek yogurt (or soy yogurt for a dairy-free version)**
- **½ cup berries, or any preferred fruit**
- **¾ cup gluten-free cereal (more than 3 grams fiber and less than 5 grams sugar) or granola**
- **2 Tbsp. chopped almonds (or any preferred nut)**
- **2 tsp. chia seeds (or ground flaxseed)**

INSTRUCTIONS

Layer the ingredients into a dish or tall glass, and enjoy!

2. LUNCH: Quick Salmon Salad

Time: 10 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

This recipe is perfect for lunchtime when you need some protein to give you sustainable energy. Super healthy and delicious, this salad consists of only whole foods, which are important for keeping your system running smoothly and at its best. Plus, it offers up plenty of healthy fats, protein and fiber. If you don't have salmon, swap in canned tuna, which is a pantry staple for many of us. If you don't have capers, mince some pickles or olives. And you can sub in onion powder and any dried herb you have on hand (dill, etc.) for the fresh parsley. Enjoy!

INGREDIENTS

½ cup boneless canned salmon
1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
1 Tbsp. lemon juice
1 tsp. red onion, minced
1 tsp. fresh parsley, chopped
1 tsp. capers, rinsed and drained
1 tsp. red wine vinegar
Salt and pepper, to taste
2 cups mixed greens

INSTRUCTIONS

In a medium bowl, combine all the ingredients except the greens; toss to combine. Serve over mixed greens.

3. DINNER: Tofu Stir-Fry With Peanut Sauce

Time: 1 hour | Makes: 2 servings

"Delicious, pressed and baked tofu should always be in your fridge because it's so good for you, but if it's not, I have alternatives!" says Denise. "Here, tofu is combined with peanut butter, brown sugar, soy sauce and your favorite colorful veggies, then served with brown rice. You can sub in cauliflower rice, too." If you're not a fan of tofu or you don't have it readily available, then you can also swap in shrimp or chicken—or throw in a handful of nuts such as peanuts or cashews on top for protein. (To save time, you can bake the tofu the day before and refrigerate it for later use. Just give it a quick heating up in the pan when you're ready to cook.) Any nut butter will do, and if you don't have rice vinegar, you can use plain vinegar with a pinch of sugar to add more to taste. Finally, almost any hearty veggies will work in this dish: frozen peas or mixed veggies, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, carrots, celery—use whatever you have!

INGREDIENTS

1 (14-oz.) block firm or extra-firm tofu, drained (or 8 oz. cooked chicken breast or cooked shrimp)
Cooking spray
3 Tbsp. creamy natural peanut butter (or cashew butter)
2 Tbsp. warm water
1 Tbsp. rice vinegar
1 Tbsp. tamari or gluten-free soy sauce
1 tsp. brown sugar (or honey)
Cayenne pepper (optional)
1 Tbsp. peanut, canola, grapeseed or coconut oil
2 cloves garlic, minced
Red pepper flakes
½ cup onion, sliced
1 cup sugar snap peas (or asparagus)
1 cup red bell pepper, sliced (or shredded carrots)
1½ cups cooked brown rice (or cauliflower rice)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Press the tofu by wrapping it in paper towels and placing it on a large plate. Place a second plate on top of the tofu, and balance a heavy can or pan on top of the plate. Let stand for at least 30 minutes, and drain off any water that collects.

2. Heat oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Cut the tofu into 1-inch cubes. Arrange the tofu on the baking sheet such that the cubes don't touch one another. Cover the tofu with cooking spray.

3. Bake 30 to 35 minutes, turning the tofu halfway through, until the tofu is brown and crispy on the outside. Once cooled, place half the cubes in an airtight container and refrigerate for later.

4. Meanwhile, make the peanut sauce: In a small bowl, whisk together the peanut butter, water, vinegar, soy sauce, brown sugar and a pinch of cayenne (if using). Set aside.

5. In a large nonstick frying pan, heat the oil over medium-high. Add the garlic and a pinch of red pepper flakes and sauté for 30 seconds. Then add the onion, sugar snap peas and bell pepper. Cook for 5 to 7 minutes, stirring frequently, or until the veggies are crisp-tender.

6. Add the peanut sauce and the remaining baked tofu to the pan and toss with the veggies. Cook 1 minute more. To serve, plate half of the veggie-tofu mixture over ¾ cup rice.

Kitchen ESSENTIALS

Keep these products in stock all year round!

"It's always a good idea to have healthy kitchen staples on hand," says Denise. "I try my best to keep all of the following products around, not only to ensure that I have healthy foods to base my meals off of, but because many of these foods last for a while and can get me and my family through any periods during which we are stuck in the house for a long time."

Many of Denise's recipes use these ingredients, so stock up on them the next time you go to the grocery store. Some items are more perishable and have less of a shelf life, so just be sure to stay aware of the use-by dates. Here, in Denise's words, are the products she likes to have at the ready.

Extra-virgin olive oil. It's heart-healthy, and I use this on most everything that calls for oil!

Avocados. They're chock-full of healthy fats! Sometimes I just scoop out a spoonful as a snack.

Lemons. These citrus fruits add so much yummy flavor and life to dishes—especially leftovers!

Kale or spinach. I love dark leafy greens for salads or sides. I almost always add them to pasta dishes, too.

Garlic. I use this natural anti-inflammatory all the time. It adds so much pizzazz to meals!

Sweet potatoes. A perfect sweet treat or substitute for white potatoes.

Quinoa. I love this protein-rich food and use it in salads, wraps and casseroles.

Carrots, onions and celery. These are kitchen staples we should all have!

Organic, omega-3-enriched eggs. These provide a quick and easy way to get protein and omega-3s.

Pre-roasted chicken from the grocery store. It's good to have a roast chicken around for healthy meals when you're trying to get food on the table fast, especially for healthy lunches.

Good sea salt. Look for fun flavors to add depth to your dishes.

It's also always good to stock up on the following in case of emergency and for any last-minute meals. All are healthful, flavorful and can help provide needed nourishment!

Boxed or canned broths. Veggie, chicken, miso—there are so many varieties to choose from, and all are a wonderful base for many dishes including soups, casseroles, stir-fries and others. Look for low-sodium brands, and stock up as they keep for a long time.

Frozen vegetables. I like to add a handful to almost anything I make, from tacos to soups to tuna salad. These are especially helpful when fresh veggies aren't available. Some of my favorites are edamame, spinach, corn and peas.

Canned tuna and salmon. Fish is an excellent source of protein, and the canned variety keeps for a long time and is versatile. I use them in casseroles, salads, sandwiches and more. If you like sardines, stock up on those, too!

Canned or boxed tomatoes. Similar to boxed broth, canned tomatoes will keep for a long time and can help punch up a variety of recipes.

Oatmeal. This is one of my favorites—oatmeal provides plenty of nutrients, plus fiber to help you stay regular and keep your energy levels up!

Canned beans. Beans are so simple and full of fiber, protein and antioxidants. Beans and legumes are a go-to for when I want a vegetarian meal, fast. I also add beans to other meals to beef them up—think soups, chilis and casseroles. And an added bonus? They are super cost-effective!

Whole grains. In addition to quinoa, try to keep brown rice, jasmine rice and barley in the pantry. They are easy to adapt into various meals, and they keep well for a long time.

Nuts. An excellent source of protein, nuts keep for months and are a great snack! Roast them or eat them raw.

Banish Late-Night MUNCHIES

And help keep inches from creeping onto your waist!

Is there anyone out there who doesn't crave a late-night snack every now and then? Denise will be the first person to admit that she gets the "midnight munchies" from time to time.

1. CLEAR OUT YOUR CABINETS AND REFRIGERATOR.

If you don't have tempting snack foods sitting in your pantry, you can't indulge. Some snacks may seem "good for you," but even healthy foods can result in weight gain if you don't eat them in moderation.

"I can absolutely relate because I like to look in the freezer for ice cream, too," she says. The cravings just have a way of sneaking up on you. Here are Denise's seven tips for avoiding them.

2. ASK A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND TO KEEP YOU HONEST.

If you get hungry an hour after dinner, buddy up and ask someone to hold you accountable. Maybe they will talk with you on the phone if they don't live with you. Or go for a walk with someone until the hunger subsides.

3. STICK WITH A PLAN AND DON'T SKIP MEALS.

If you miss breakfast or lunch, you will be hungry at night as your body tries to compensate for the missing calories.

4. SLOW DOWN WHEN YOU EAT.

It takes time (about 15 to 20 minutes) for your brain to get the message from your stomach that you're full. Put your fork down every few bites to slow down. Chew your food well, and sip water or another calorie-free beverage.

5. DRINK WATER BEFORE DINNER.

Filling up on water will help you control your appetite.

6. START MEALS WITH A SOUP OR A SALAD.

The water content (and the fiber in vegetables) makes you feel more satisfied, so you'll eat less of the main course. "I like to keep bagged salads from the supermarket in my refrigerator vegetable bin so I always have a fresh salad to use at mealtime," says Denise. Be sure to wash vegetables and bagged salads—even the ones that say "prewashed"—to make sure they are clean prior to eating them.

7. SIP FLAVORFUL HERBAL TEA.

There are many varieties of decaffeinated herbal tea—blackberry, acai-mango, orange-tangerine, apple-cinnamon, lemon-ginger—that really calm hunger pangs and leave you feeling satisfied. You can get packages of herbal tea that contain several different types, and you can drink herbal tea hot or iced. Add a squeeze of lemon, lime or orange to give it more zest. Think of it as a no-calorie dessert that you can have anytime!

DENISE'S DO'S!

Studies show that people are more likely to pace themselves if they play slow, relaxing music during a meal. So put on some classical music—"my favorite is Bach!" says Denise—and nourish your mind while you're nourishing your body.

“To reach your wellness goals, you have to believe that you’re worth the effort!”

Effortless SPRING RECIPES

Delicious, easy recipes that are tasty and oh-so-good for your waistline, too!

"Here's a little secret: I adore food!" says Denise. "I really love food, I just don't abuse it! My mom was a terrific cook, and my sisters, brother and I grew up surrounded by the smells of a warm kitchen. Our family celebrations centered on food: family recipes from my grandmother and special dishes based on what was fresh and seasonal. Even now, when I get together with my family on vacation, our liveliest debates are based on what to eat for dinner!

"Of course, I've had to modify my calorie intake over the years to match the natural slowing of my metabolism, but I've never deprived myself of the foods I love. I've just learned to eat differently: smaller portions, more frequent meals, minimizing unhealthy foods and loading up on the healthy ones! All these little changes can really add up—they can help keep your metabolism revved up and running around the clock, help lower the risk for some diseases, and not only help slow the aging process but even undo damage done over the years.

"And it's easy to incorporate my eating strategies into your lifestyle, especially with the following recipes," says Denise. "Soon, healthful eating will become second nature!"

Get Up & Go BREAKFASTS

Morning meals to kick-start metabolism

Morning Glory Smoothie

Time: 5 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

4 oz. fruit-flavored yogurt
½ cup fresh berries, sliced peaches or banana, or ½ cup unsweetened frozen berries
½ cup orange juice
⅓ cup toasted wheat bran
1 slice multigrain bread, toasted
1 tsp. whipped butter

INSTRUCTIONS

Combine the first four ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. Enjoy your delicious morning smoothie with multigrain toast and butter.

Raspberries are a great source of antioxidants. They have 50% more antioxidant potential than strawberries! Denise puts them in smoothies, adds them to yogurt or ice cream, or just eats them on their own.

Fried Egg Sammie

Time: 10 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

Cooking spray
1 egg
Hot sauce
2 slices multigrain bread, toasted
¼ cantaloupe

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Coat a nonstick frying pan with cooking spray and heat on medium-high. Fry egg sunny-side up to desired doneness. Add a dash of hot sauce for some oomph!

2. Serve on multigrain toast, and enjoy with fresh cantaloupe on the side.

Pro tip: Sprinkle on other dried herbs and spices to add even more flavor to this classic breakfast. Add fresh chives for a little spiciness, cumin and turmeric for earthiness, or fresh basil and cracked pepper for a summery taste.

Veggie Omelet

Time: 10 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

- **Cooking spray**
- **2 eggs**
- **½ cup frozen or fresh vegetables**
- **1 Tbsp. Parmesan cheese, grated**
- **1 slice multigrain bread, toasted**
- **1 tsp. butter**
- **1 tsp. fruit preserves**

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Coat an omelet pan with cooking spray and heat over medium-high. Lightly whisk eggs, then add to the pan. Allow egg mixture to travel down the sides of the pan to create a fluffy egg base.

2. Add veggies and cheese to the pan. Cook for about 2 minutes, or until egg is cooked through. Serve omelet with multigrain toast topped with butter and preserves.

Breakfast Burrito

Time: 10 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

Cooking spray

2 eggs

1 Tbsp. milk

2 Tbsp. salsa

1 flour tortilla

½ grapefruit

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Coat a nonstick frying pan with cooking spray and heat on medium-high. Scramble eggs with milk and cook to desired doneness.

2. Spoon eggs and salsa into tortilla, and enjoy with fresh grapefruit or your fruit of choice on the side.

"Eggs are easy to cook and a good source of protein," Denise says. Studies have shown that when people who are overweight eat egg-based breakfasts, they tend to feel less hungry and fuller for hours after.

Healthy SNACKS

Keep cravings at bay and your energy up

Cottage Cheese Bowl

Time: 5 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

¾ cup cottage cheese or part-skim ricotta
½ cup mixed berries
1 Tbsp. almonds or muesli

INSTRUCTIONS

Layer cottage cheese with berries and almonds or muesli in a bowl, and enjoy! Denise likes to add pineapple to her cottage cheese bowl, too, but you can use whatever fruit you have on hand.

Cottage cheese is chock-full of vitamin A, potassium and calcium, which plays a very important role in bone health. Research also suggests that people who eat protein-rich snacks like cottage cheese enjoy better muscle quality.

Mango Salsa

Time: 5 minutes | Makes: 4 servings

INGREDIENTS

1 mango, peeled, pitted and diced (equivalent to 1 cup)
¼ cup diced red onion
½ small jalapeño pepper, ribs and seeds removed, finely diced
2 Tbsp. cilantro, chopped
1 Tbsp. lime juice
¼ tsp. black pepper
Pinch of salt

INSTRUCTIONS

In a medium bowl, combine all the ingredients and stir together until well mixed. Enjoy with baked tortilla or pita chips!

Lentil & Avo Dip

Time: 15 minutes | Makes: 4 servings

INGREDIENTS

1 cup lentils
½ cup low-fat sour cream
Juice of 1 lime or lemon
1 Tbsp. cilantro, chopped
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 ripe avocado, peeled, pitted and diced
1 small tomato, diced (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook lentils according to package instructions in water or broth. Drain. In a bowl, whisk together sour cream, lime or lemon juice, cilantro, and salt and pepper.

2. Add lentils, and stir or smash to combine. Add the avocado when you're ready to serve so that it does not turn brown; top with tomato, if desired. Enjoy with baked tortilla or pita chips or spread onto toast.

Simple Sweet Potato Bakes

Time: 1 hour 30 minutes
Makes: 4 servings

INGREDIENTS

2 medium-sized sweet potatoes

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Bake sweet potatoes until cooked (about an hour). If you're using a microwave, cook for about 15 minutes.

2. Let potatoes cool, then cut in half and wrap each half in foil. Place in the refrigerator for 30 minutes or until cold. Serve potato halves in foil and eat with a spoon, like you're scooping your favorite ice cream out of a cone. Simple, nutritious and sweet!

> **"Make these super yummy sweet potato bakes ahead of time for munching on later," Denise says. "They are one of my favorite naturally sweet snacks!"**

Vegetarian LUNCHES

You won't miss the meat at all in these yummy recipes

Portobello Mushroom Sandwich

Time: 20 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

1 large portobello mushroom
1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
1 tsp. garlic, minced
1 splash Worcestershire sauce
1 squeeze lemon juice
1 whole-grain roll
½ roasted red pepper, sliced
1 Tbsp. crumbled blue cheese, or cheese of your choice

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a nonstick frying pan, sauté mushroom in olive oil, garlic, Worcestershire sauce and lemon juice over medium-high, about 5 minutes on each side. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes, or until tender.

2. Serve on a whole-grain roll and top with roasted red pepper and cheese.

Mushrooms are a low-calorie source of fiber, protein and antioxidants. Their anti-inflammatory properties also help give your immune system an added boost!

Spinach, Tomato & Mozz Melt

Time: 10 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

2 slices flatbread or whole-grain pita
1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
½ cup spinach
1 tomato, sliced
½ cup shredded mozzarella cheese or crumbled feta
1 orange

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Brush both slices of flatbread or pita with olive oil, then layer one slice with spinach, tomato and cheese. Top with other slice of bread, then place under broiler and broil until cheese is melted.

2. Cut orange into wedges and serve on the side.

> **"Extra-virgin olive oil is my go-to for cooking and dressing salads," Denise says. Studies have shown that consuming olive oil increased the number of calories burned by postmenopausal women for several hours after eating.**

Vegetable Quesadillas

Time: 15 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
1 clove garlic, minced
¼ cup onion, chopped
¼ cup mushrooms, chopped
¼ cup zucchini, chopped
¼ cup broccoli, chopped
¼ cup cauliflower, chopped
½ cup canned chopped tomatoes
2 flour tortillas
2 oz. Gouda cheese

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a nonstick frying pan, heat oil over medium and sauté garlic until translucent, about 2 minutes. Add onion, mushrooms, zucchini, broccoli, cauliflower and tomatoes. Cook until tender.

2. Divide veggies between two tortillas; top with 1 oz. cheese each. Place under broiler and broil until cheese is melted. Fold in half and slice into triangles.

Fiber is so important in a healthy diet as it promotes gut health and can aid in weight loss. Just 1 cup of raw broccoli provides 2.3 grams of fiber—that's about 5% to 10% of the daily recommended value.

Eggplant Parmesan

Time: 15 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

- **¼ eggplant, peeled and sliced into ¼-inch-thick slices (if you don't like eggplant, substitute a 6-inch zucchini)**
- **2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- **½ cup chunky pasta sauce**
- **2 Tbsp. shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese**
- **2 Tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese**
- **1 whole-grain roll**
- **Garlic powder**

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Pat eggplant slices with paper towels to remove extra moisture and brush both sides of each using 1 tsp. olive oil. Broil or grill for 5 minutes.

2. Place eggplant slices in a small baking dish and cover with ¼ cup sauce and 1 Tbsp. each mozzarella and Parmesan. Repeat with remaining eggplant, sauce and cheese. Bake for 15 minutes, until cheese is melted and golden brown.

3. Serve with garlic toast: Cut whole-grain roll in half and brush with remaining olive oil. Dust with garlic powder, then broil lightly until golden.

Post-Workout FUEL

These smoothies are great for breakfast or a snack!

Avocado Smoothie

Time: 5 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

1 cup milk
1 ripe avocado, halved and pitted
½ cup vanilla yogurt
3 Tbsp. honey
8 ice cubes

INSTRUCTIONS

Combine all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. Add more milk for a thinner consistency.

Blueberry-Banana Smoothie

Time: 5 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

1 cup frozen blueberries
1 banana
½ cup whole milk vanilla yogurt
4 oz. orange juice

INSTRUCTIONS

Combine all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. If the texture is too thick, add water a little bit at a time until the desired consistency is reached.

Bananas provide a healthy source of fiber, potassium, vitamin B6, vitamin C and various antioxidants and phytonutrients. A diet high in potassium can lower blood pressure in people with elevated levels.

Fruity Protein Smoothie

Time: 5 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup plain Greek yogurt
- ½ cup milk
- ¾ cup strawberries, or preferred fruit
- ½ banana
- 2 handfuls spinach or kale leaves
- 1 Tbsp. almond butter
- 1 tsp. honey (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

Combine all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. Add more milk if you prefer a thinner smoothie.

Pro tip: "After I mix my smoothie in the blender, I add hot water right away and mix it up again to rinse the canister! It gets all the sticky juice out, which saves you so much time and scrubbing later, especially if you do it right away," says Denise.

Spring Green Smoothie

Time: 5 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup fresh mango, or 8 oz. mango juice
- 1½ cups spinach
- 1½ cups kale
- 1 Tbsp. ginger root, chopped
- 8 ice cubes

INSTRUCTIONS

Combine all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. Pour into a glass, and enjoy!

Denise's Delicious DINNERS

Satisfying meals to help you wind down your day

Rosemary Chicken

Time: 40 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

- ½ chicken breast
- 1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ clove garlic, minced
- ¼ tsp. dried rosemary, or 1 tsp. fresh rosemary
- 1 cup sugar snap peas
- 4 small red potatoes
- Garlic powder
- Salt and pepper, to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Brush chicken breast with olive oil and rub with garlic and rosemary. Cover chicken with foil and bake until cooked through, about 20 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, steam sugar snap peas until crisp-tender, about 5 minutes. Boil the potatoes until fork-tender, about 15 minutes. Season potatoes with olive oil, garlic powder, and salt and pepper.

Teriyaki Tuna

Time: 20 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

4 oz. tuna steak
2 Tbsp. ginger teriyaki sauce, store-bought
Sesame seeds
1 cup haricot verts
1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
1 clove garlic, minced

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Brush both sides of tuna steak with teriyaki sauce. Sprinkle with sesame seeds, then grill or broil until cooked through, about 5 minutes per side.

2. Sauté haricot verts with olive oil and garlic until crisp-tender, about 5 minutes, and serve with tuna. Denise also likes to serve her tuna steak with a baked sweet potato.

Roasted Pork Loin

Time: 45 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

Cooking spray
4 oz. piece of pork loin
¼ cup yellow onion, diced
½ cup pasteurized apple juice or cider
½ cup carrots, diced
1 Granny Smith apple, peeled and cut into wedges
1 4-inch potato, diced
Rosemary
Onion powder
Pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Coat a nonstick frying pan with cooking spray and heat to medium-high. Brown pork loin with onion and apple juice.

2. Transfer to a baking dish. Add carrots, apple and potato to the dish. Season pork with rosemary, onion powder and pepper.

3. Cover with foil and bake 30 minutes, or until no longer pink in the middle.

Crab & Salmon Cakes

Time: 40 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

1 5-inch potato, thinly sliced
1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
Paprika
6 oz. can salmon
4 oz. package crabmeat, or imitation crab
2 Tbsp. bread crumbs
½ red pepper, finely chopped
2 Tbsp. Dijonnaise
Onion powder
Old Bay seasoning
Cooking spray
1 cup snow peas
1 tsp. white horseradish
1 Tbsp. mustard
Low-sodium soy sauce

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Brush potato slices with olive oil and sprinkle with paprika. Bake for 30 minutes or until tender.

2. While potato bakes, in a bowl, combine salmon and crab. Add bread crumbs, red pepper, Dijonnaise, onion powder and Old Bay seasoning.

3. Form two patties. Wrap one patty in plastic wrap and save for tomorrow's lunch! Coat a nonstick frying pan with cooking spray. Cook remaining patty over medium-high until brown on one side, about 5 minutes. Then flip and brown the other side. While patty is cooking, steam the snow peas until tender, about 10 minutes.

4. In a small bowl, combine horseradish and mustard. Serve patty with horseradish-mustard sauce, potatoes and snow peas with a splash of soy sauce.

"I love these Crab & Salmon Cakes because they remind me of my runs along the Potomac River!" says Denise.

Guilt-Free TREATS

These sweet desserts are as tasty as they are nutritious

Rice Pudding

Time: 5 Minutes | Makes: 1 Serving

INGREDIENTS

⅔ cup cooked brown rice
½ cup skim milk
2 Tbsp. toasted wheat bran
1 egg, beaten
2 Tbsp. raisins
1 Tbsp. sugar, honey or syrup
Cinnamon

INSTRUCTIONS

Combine ingredients up to cinnamon in a saucepan and heat for about 5 to 7 minutes, or for about 2 minutes in a microwave. Sprinkle with cinnamon before serving, and enjoy!

Baked Apple

Time: 20 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

1 Granny Smith apple
¼ cup orange juice
⅓ cup dry oats
¼ cup toasted wheat bran
2 tsp. butter, melted
1 Tbsp. brown sugar
Cinnamon
4 oz. vanilla yogurt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Peel and slice apple and place in a baking dish. Pour orange juice on top.

2. In a separate bowl, mix together oats, wheat bran, butter, brown sugar and cinnamon. Sprinkle oat mixture over apple. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, until oats are golden brown. Top with yogurt. It's a great way to end the day!

French Toast

Time: 10 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

1 egg
¼ cup skim milk
2 slices multigrain bread
Cooking spray
Cinnamon
Confectioners' sugar
½ cup mixed berries, sliced

INSTRUCTIONS

In a small bowl, beat egg with milk. Add bread and soak thoroughly. Coat nonstick frying pan with cooking spray. Add bread and cook until browned on each side. Sprinkle with cinnamon, sugar and berries before serving.

Denise's Favorite Chocolate Shake

Time: 20 minutes | Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS

1¼ cup milk
1 cup vanilla yogurt
2 tsp. pure vanilla extract
2 Tbsp. chocolate malt powder (Denise likes Ovaltine!)

INSTRUCTIONS

Place all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. Serve cold.

> **"These are a great calcium boost," Denise says. "Even Jeff loves these low-calorie 'milk' shakes!"**

7-Day MEAL PLAN

A sample week of healthy at-home meals that will help you look and feel your best!

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
BREAKFAST	Morning Glory Smoothie	Fried Egg Sammie	Veggie Omelet
SNACK	Cottage Cheese Bowl	Mango Salsa	Lentil & Avo Dip
LUNCH	Portobello Mushroom Sandwich	Spinach, Tomato & Mozz Melt	Vegetable Quesadillas
SMOOTHIES	Blueberry-Banana Smoothie	Fruity Protein Smoothie	Spring Green Smoothie
DINNER	Rosemary Chicken	Teriyaki Tuna	Roasted Pork Loin
TREAT	Baked Apple	Rice Pudding	Denise's Favorite Chocolate Shake

Get more recipes like these in
Denise Austin's online meal plan.
Learn more at *DeniseAustin.com*!

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Breakfast Burrito	**Morning Glory Smoothie**	**Fried Egg Sammie**	**Veggie Omelet**
Simple Sweet Potato Bakes	**Mango Salsa**	**Cottage Cheese Bowl**	**Simple Sweet Potato Bakes**
Eggplant Parmesan	**Portobello Mushroom Sandwich**	**Vegetable Quesadillas**	**Eggplant Parmesan**
Avocado Smoothie	**Fruity Protein Smoothie**	**Spring Green Smoothie**	**Blueberry-Banana Smoothie**
Crab & Salmon Cakes	**Roasted Pork Loin**	**Teriyaki Tuna**	**Rosemary Chicken**
French Toast	**Baked Apple**	**Denise's Favorite Chocolate Shake**	**Rice Pudding**

DON'T PROCRASTINATE Another Day!

Spring is a time for renewal, so make good on that promise to reach your goals!

How often have you said, "I'll do it tomorrow"? How many "next weeks" are in your past? How long have you been making these kinds of excuses to avoid doing something? If you wait until you're in the mood, you might be waiting forever! Successful people know that the key to getting anything done is to take action. Once you get started on something, you'll often feel inspired to keep going.

The hardest part of completing any new project or goal is taking those first few steps. It might feel like the more you think about it, the more anxiety you have. Then the more anxiety you have, the more self-doubt you create. You can think about getting in better shape and eating more healthfully, but only *thinking* about it won't actually get you there.

Denise's advice: Don't think—just do! Pick something easy to get started on. A series of small successes will help you gain the momentum needed to finish your goal. Give yourself a pat on the back for small victories, whether it's walking for 30 minutes or having a healthy salad for lunch. And remember: You don't have to do everything perfectly—just do the best you can!

Habit STACKING

Try these six easy steps to make progress on your goals a little bit at a time!

If you are looking for small, simple, yet totally effective steps to a healthier and happier year, try habit stacking! It's been shown that once you add a new mini goal to your daily routine, it can become a habit after 30 days. Here are six suggestions from Denise to try.

1. WHEN COOKING DINNER, fill up a glass with water and sip it while you cook. In fact, you can do this during every meal you prepare to help you drink more water throughout the day. Staying hydrated is important for proper digestion, maintaining energy and even helping keep your skin looking plump and youthful.

2. WHILE YOU BRUSH AND FLOSS YOUR TEETH, do squats! Keeping our mouths healthy is important, especially as we age, and plaque buildup is associated with heart concerns. So every time you brush and floss, do some squats to take your healthy routine up a notch!

3. WHEN MAKING A SALAD, fill your bowl with healthy extras. "I love salad because it is light and veggies are rich in vitamins and fiber," says Denise. If you want an even more nutrient-dense and filling meal, add in beans (potassium and fiber!), nuts (antioxidants!), a hard-boiled egg (omega-3s—if you opt for that kind of egg—and protein!) and a squeeze of lemon (vitamin C!). All of these are so delicious, and so good for you, too!

4. WHEN DRINKING MORNING TEA OR COFFEE, write down what you're grateful for that day. Research has shown that practicing gratitude on a regular basis can make you happier over the long term. After all, doing so encourages you to be thankful for the things you have in your life rather than the things that might be missing. "I like to write down my gratitude list in my journal," Denise says. "That way I can easily go back and see how my mindset and mood have progressed." A plus: Green tea and coffee also have many health benefits, including reducing the risk of several chronic illnesses such as heart disease.

5. WHEN GOING FOR A WALK, pick up the pace for 10 seconds every minute. If you would like to run, go for it! But even if you just go as fast as you can to the point where you are out of breath (pump your arms to really level up), this type of interval walking will help you burn more calories and fat and is great for your cardiovascular health.

6. WHEN GETTING READY FOR BED, lay out your workout clothes for the morning. "This is part of my nighttime routine, along with making sure the temperature and lighting in our bedroom is where we like it. Laying out my clothes makes getting up and exercising a no-brainer!" says Denise. "It really does motivate me to get my workout done so I can check it off my to-do list for the day!"

“Get moving and start doing, and your mind will follow!”

The Power of CONNECTION

Research indicates that our happiness and health are directly correlated to the depth of our relationships

We all know that spending time with our loved ones can bring us joy. But did you know that the relationships we keep can have an effect on our overall well-being too? According to a landmark study from Harvard University, the level of satisfaction we feel in our relationships can be a big predictor of our health as we grow older.

Beginning in the 1930s, different sets of researchers followed hundreds of participants (and eventually their offspring) over a span of more than 80 years, collecting scores of data on their physical and mental health. They found that more than any other factor—including wealth, fame and genes—having meaningful connections and strong social support turned out to be one of the better determinants for whether people reported being happier and lived longer.

"The relationships we foster allow us to release stress, find pleasure in life, and even help cement our identity and find purpose—it's quite extraordinary how powerful these connections are and how many functions they serve," Marc Schulz, Ph.D., associate director of the Harvard study, told *First for Women*.

It's never too late to foster relationships and enjoy the benefits of finding a community. "We heard so many stories of people who were lonely in their 70s or 80s, but once they started doing a few things differently—like ending a bad relationship or reaching out to an old friend—they felt so much happier," Schulz said.

Here are some suggestions for how to deepen your relationships—and feel more fulfilled!

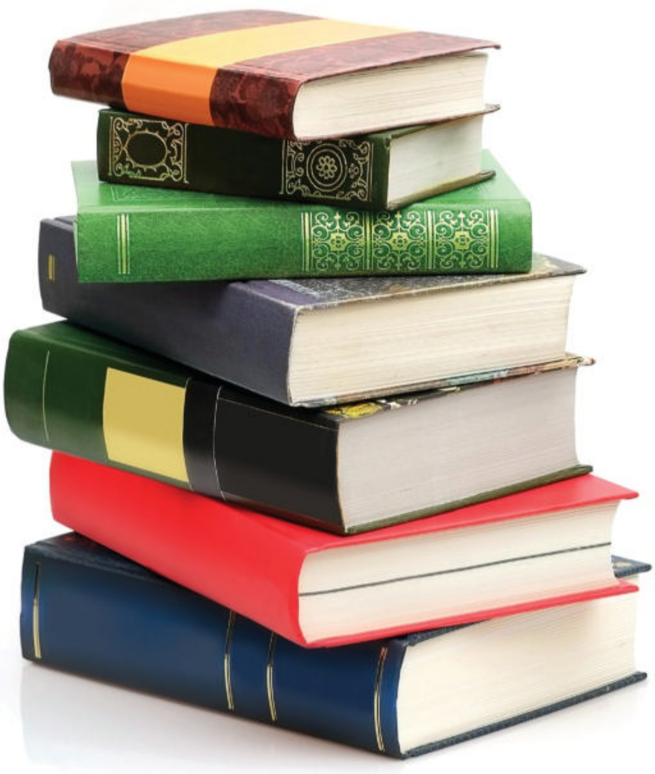
1 **REACH OUT FOR SUPPORT.** Whether you're a 50-year-old mom or a housebound senior, it's important to have friends and loved ones you can count on for advice and who appreciate your opinions and efforts. This kind of positive support system is particularly crucial when you're making major lifestyle changes like starting an exercise program or trying to lose weight. Who better to share concerns about nagging personal problems with than your sister or a trusted friend? Taking time to maintain or build healthy relationships isn't selfish—it's a vital part of the anti-aging equation.

"Who I spend my time with has become more and more important to me as I get older," Denise says. "Why waste all that precious time and energy on people who make you feel bad about yourself?" While positive relationships can make life more interesting, exciting and fun, negative relationships do just the opposite: They suck the life out of you. Take a moment right now to think about the people who surround you at work, at home and socially. Would you characterize them as optimists or pessimists? Do they make you feel good or sad? Relationships should be invigorating forces in our lives. So if you're not getting the love and support you need, it's time to go out and find it.

2 VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME. What could be more spiritually uplifting than doing something nice for another person? Being altruistic doesn't have to mean donating your life savings to charity. The best gifts in life are free—and they give back times three! Spend a Saturday volunteering with your kids to clean up a local park or lend a hand at your local soup kitchen. The community will benefit, and so will your muscles as you rake leaves or serve up dozens of meals! You'll realize how lucky you are and all that you have to offer. And you'll feel appreciated and learn to revel in the joy of small gestures.

3 BE A GOOD FRIEND TO OTHERS. Listening may be the ultimate example of selfless living, and it's a gift that you can bestow every day. It can be tough to sit and listen to someone else's problems without jumping in and trying to solve them. Remember that the person doing the talking may not want advice—she simply may want to get her troubles off her chest. The best way to help may be to listen without offering your two cents. If nothing else, call your friends regularly. According to a study published in *JAMA Psychiatry*, chatting on the phone for as little as 10 minutes a day was found to decrease loneliness by more than 20%.

4 KEEP LEARNING. Youth is all about growth and learning. As children, we seemed to have countless hours to practice the piano, perfect our French accent or read the classics. But now that we're grown-ups, we usually spend our free time paying bills, cleaning the house or watching TV. Just because you're getting older doesn't mean you should close the door on educational experiences. Like all the muscles in your body, your mind needs regular exercise. So as you work to get your body in better shape, consider how to keep your brain stimulated and sharp—it will keep you interesting, too! Check out your community college or local activity center for courses. Study Italian while saving up for a trip to Italy. Take up a new hobby like painting, pottery, wood carving or cooking. Read one worthwhile book a month or—one of Denise's favorite motivators—download a biography or an educational podcast and only allow yourself to listen when you do your daily walks!



All of these activities can also help you foster micro connections. Strike up a conversation with the other students. Better yet, find a study buddy in your language class. Grab coffee with your pottery teacher. Even minor interactions can give you a "huge energy boost," Schulz said. "These connections remind us of our shared humanity."

DENISE'S DO'S!

"I've always talked about the impact of your attitude on your life, and I'll keep talking about it because it is so important!" says Denise. "When you are on the path to creating a healthy lifestyle, maintaining a positive attitude is as valuable as improving your eating habits and increasing your physical activity. While it can often seem like your attitude is the hardest thing to change, doing so can sometimes be as simple as recognizing what you're feeling and making the conscious decision to change it."

MENOPAUSE 101: Depression & Anxiety

Here's what you can do about these common symptoms

Perimenopause and menopause can bring on a slew of uncomfortable symptoms, from hot flashes and fatigue to vaginal dryness and insomnia—symptoms that can last for years. For some women, these physical changes combined with any lack of sleep can result in an emotional roller coaster. One day you could feel fine, then the next you feel moody, sad or out of control.

"I first began to notice hot flashes and night sweats when I turned 50," says Denise, who turned 66 in February 2023. "I also experienced anxiety, mood swings and changes in my sleep during my menopausal years."

What's the reason behind these unpredictable mood swings? During perimenopause, your body's production of the sex hormones estrogen, progesterone and testosterone fluctuates significantly until levels eventually taper off entirely. These hormonal changes can increase the risk of developing anxiety and depression (especially if you have a prior history).

Fortunately, you don't have to suffer. There are some different treatment options that can help alleviate these symptoms. (In cases of severe anxiety or depression, be sure to speak to a health professional for the right course of action for you.)

MAKE LIFESTYLE CHANGES. Creating healthy habits such as exercising regularly, adopting a healthier diet, taking the time for self-care and practicing mindfulness (think walking meditations, breathing exercises and spending time outside in nature) may help improve some symptoms of menopause—including anxiety and depression. Make getting a good night's rest a priority too.

When Denise was going through menopause, she started incorporating daily yoga sessions into her routine to help relieve her anxiety and reduce lower back pain. "Yoga is a great way to ease your nervous system and relieve lower back pain and neck tension," she says. If you're just getting back into exercising or starting an exercise program for the first time, yoga is also a good way to kick things off because it's low impact and flexible with your schedule. You can practice it just about anywhere—at home with Denise's videos on her YouTube channel, in a studio with an instructor or even outside.

"Health is wealth! It's so important to find ways to stay active and motivated," Denise says.

> “There is nothing more rewarding than taking care of yourself!”

TRY HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY. If you are experiencing anxiety and depression and suspect it's a symptom of menopause, talk to your gynecologist or a specialist about hormone replacement therapy. HRT is meant to address the root cause of your anxiety or depression—hormone imbalance—rather than treat the symptoms. The type of therapy will differ for every patient and you'll have to discuss with your doctor which hormones are appropriate for you, but treatment methods can include pills, injections, patches, gels, sprays and vaginal creams. HRT may also help alleviate other menopause symptoms such as night sweats, hot flashes and vaginal dryness.

TALK TO YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM. Having quality hang time with friends and family can also help ease depression symptoms. It's easy to feel isolated when perimenopause begins, but just remember: All women will go through it one day. Chances are, your girlfriends are having a similar experience to you, so talk to them about it. "You're not alone!" says Denise, who emphasizes that menopause is simply a part of life. "Lean on your friends and loved ones to help you get through it." Denise had her older sisters to turn to for support. She and her friends also shared what they were living through during girls' nights.

Sometimes a multistep approach will need to be taken to help alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression during your menopausal years. But being open about your experiences with menopause can help others understand the hormonal changes and the mood swings that can occur during that time—and how to tackle them so that you're not suffering.

Abdominal Breathing

This exercise is great for instant relaxation! Lie down on your back or sit comfortably. Place your hands on your abdomen. Inhale slowly and deeply, breathing air all the way down into the lower lobes of your lungs. As these fill with air, your lower belly should expand like a balloon. (Keep one hand on it so you can feel it happening.) Exhale slowly, allowing your abdomen to deflate as your body releases stale air. Inhale easily. Feel your belly expand again. Repeat for 3 to 5 minutes.

Bye-Bye MENOPAUSE BELLY!

Eating healthfully and staying active are the keys to battling middle age spread

If you are approaching perimenopause—the 10-year transition period leading up to menopause—you may be noticing a shift in your body, especially in how your weight is distributed. Most women in their 20s and 30s carry their fat in their hips, buttocks and thighs (where it helps to reserve fuel necessary for breastfeeding). As we hit the age of perimenopause, however—usually beginning around age 40—the fat starts to get redistributed to the belly area. According to a March 2019 study in the journal *JCI Insight*, it's at this stage that women may see up to a fourfold increase in fat and loss of lean body mass. We call this phenomenon "menopause belly."

Before and during menopause, the body's production of the hormones estrogen, progesterone and testosterone drops, triggering changes in the body that cause it to store and burn fat in different ways. If you don't tackle this midsection weight gain from the start, it can quickly get out of control. It's not healthy to have too much extra weight around your belly. For women, a waistline larger than 35 inches is an indicator of health concerns such as heart disease and Type 2 diabetes.

Managing unwanted weight gain around the tummy comes down to two main things: diet and exercise. Keep reading to learn how to take control.

EAT FRESH. As you age, it's a good rule of thumb to focus on high-quality, whole, fresh foods as the basis of all your meals. You want to eat seven to 10 servings of vegetables and fruits a day. Veggies are high in fiber and water but low in calories. After menopause, as your metabolism slows, you'll need to eat fewer calories. Adding fiber-rich vegetables to your diet helps you eat fewer calories without eating a smaller volume of food. Think of it as treating yourself as well as you can now, for a healthy body for all the days and years to come. The more you care for and nurture yourself, the healthier you will be (and feel), both physically and emotionally, down the road.

Also try to add foods that lower inflammation to your diet. During your menopausal years, the amount of oxidative damage increases through the body and can trigger chronic inflammation, which can make losing weight difficult. Protect your body by eating more foods that are high in antioxidants, which help fight cell-damaging free radicals that can cause oxidative stress. These foods include artichokes, avocado, beets, raspberries, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, kale, walnuts, spinach and sweet potatoes.

"I am a firm believer in eating as much fresh produce as possible," Denise explains, "which is why I stick to the 80/20 rule: 80% of the time, I eat healthy—veggies and fruit take up most of my plate, with lean proteins and healthy fats such as extra-virgin olive oil and nuts making up the rest. This helps me stick to a healthy eating plan and curbs my cravings for the bad stuff!"

Still, she continues, "I love sweet treats and snacks like everyone else! I just eat them in moderation, or at 20%. I find this to be an effective way to make sure I am giving back to my body but also indulging every now and then. A win-win!"

Another pro tip: Add eggs to your diet. Estrogen helps tissues burn blood sugar for fuel, which is why controlling menopause-related weight gain tends to be challenging. Eggs offer nutrients that substitute for estrogen, improving blood-sugar control and fat metabolism, a study in Australia found.

MIX IT UP. As for exercise, the best way to tackle that menopause muffin top is through a whole-body workout along with some targeted ab exercises, constantly changing up your workout so your body doesn't get bored. Aim for 45 minutes of exercise daily: three or four days of cardio each week, and two or three days of strength training, which will help boost your metabolism, thereby helping you burn fat more efficiently. When doing cardio walking workouts, vary your pace between higher-intensity bursts of speed walking and slow, steady strolling. Be sure to add moves targeted to your waistline and abs to really work the muscles in your midsection, as well as stretching exercises, which can release tension and increase muscle elasticity. "When you stretch, you release the kinks in your muscles, improve your posture and straighten your spine, which can make you look up to 10 pounds thinner instantly!" says Denise.

RELAX! Stress interferes with the functioning of your adrenal glands. You need these glands to function effectively after menopause, as they assist in the production of estrogen by your fat cells. Whenever you begin to feel anxious, jittery or tense, stop what you're doing. Close your eyes and focus on your breathing. Try to take deep breaths from your tummy, in and out slowly through your nose. If you still can't relax, try tensing and then, on the exhale, releasing the muscles in your body. Start with your feet and move up to your head. Then, try to tense your entire body at once and release as you sigh. You'll feel relaxed and clearheaded.

PRACTICE GOOD SLEEP HYGIENE.

Insomnia is a common symptom of perimenopause, which can last for from four to eight years. (For some women, it can last as long as 10 years!) According to the National Sleep Foundation, sleep disorders affect between 39% and 47% of perimenopausal women and between 35% and 60% of postmenopausal women.

All that time spent tossing and turning in bed means you're not getting enough quality sleep, so exerting energy during a workout is probably the last thing you'll feel like doing. Getting high-quality sleep is crucial if you want to avoid the dreaded menopause belly. In fact, a study from the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* found that people who don't get enough sleep tend to experience an increase of abdominal fat. When you are sleep-deprived, your hunger hormones (ghrelin and leptin) increase, which makes you feel less full and satisfied, causing you to want to eat more.

DENISE'S ADVICE: Denise closes down her kitchen by 8 p.m. so she doesn't snack before bed, which can interrupt sleep and cause weight gain. She also set a strict bedtime routine, going to sleep every night at 10 p.m. and then rising early at 6 a.m. to start her day.

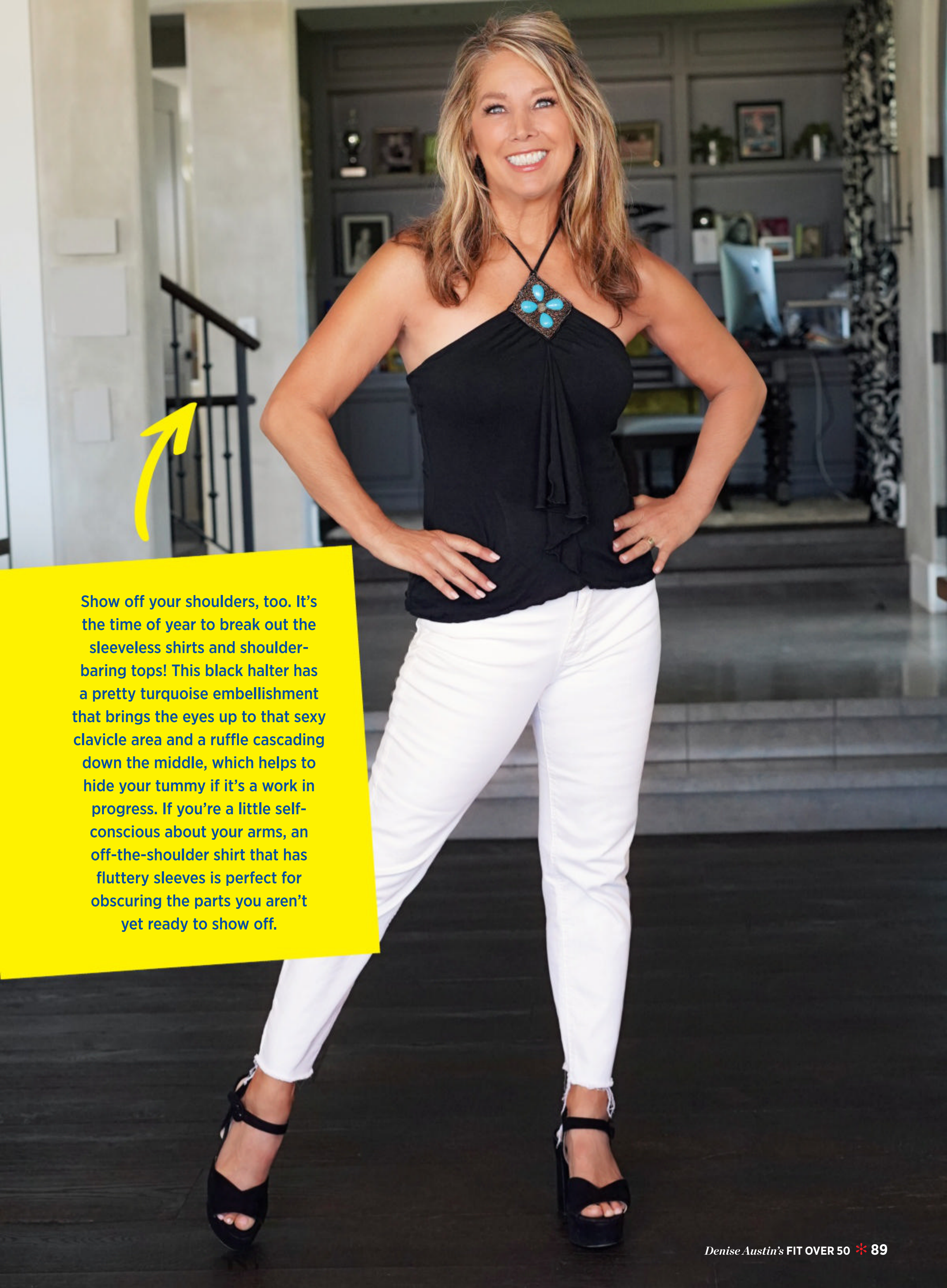
It's Never Too Late TO FEEL SEXY!

Take it from Denise—you can feel your best at any age. Follow these fun spring fashion tips if you want to dress to impress.

Throw on some high heels! Wearing heels actually changes the way we carry our bodies, making us stand taller and putting extra emphasis on both our backsides and our chests! A strappy, heeled sandal pairs perfectly with a sparkly jumper or with jeans and a T-shirt for a fun nighttime look. Go ahead and strut your stuff!

Rock that pink dress! Wearing bold colors shows confidence! And what color is more feminine and youthful than pink? Science has shown that looking at warm bright colors such as pink or red actually releases dopamine (aka the feel-good hormone), and that can help improve our mood, making us feel happier—and sexier.

Show off your legs! You've been working hard for your lean legs—let them shine! An A-line silhouette is always flattering, whether it's a denim mini or a cotton knee-length skirt. If you're not very tall, a short hemline can make you appear taller, so try out any length that is above the knee to elongate your body and visually add inches to your height. For daytime, pair your skirt with a slightly oversize top and sandals to show off your shapely legs. Throw on a longer light jacket and a pair of high-heeled sandals for a night out.



Show off your shoulders, too. It's the time of year to break out the sleeveless shirts and shoulder-baring tops! This black halter has a pretty turquoise embellishment that brings the eyes up to that sexy clavicle area and a ruffle cascading down the middle, which helps to hide your tummy if it's a work in progress. If you're a little self-conscious about your arms, an off-the-shoulder shirt that has fluttery sleeves is perfect for obscuring the parts you aren't yet ready to show off.

Swipe on some red lipstick! "Women over 50, including me, start to experience thinning lips," says Denise. "To help plump up my lips, I start with a lip liner just a shade darker than my natural color, outline my lips using short strokes, then fill them in a little bit with the liner to add a touch of color. If Jeff and I are going out for a date night, I like to make a bold statement with a red lip—look for a cream or satin lipstick (instead of matte) to keep your lips moisturized." Pro tip: Dab on a little gloss for a shiny finish!

Put on your favorite accessories! “I love finishing off my look with a stack of bracelets, dangly earrings or even a delicate anklet,” Denise says. “Accessories will take a casual outfit up a notch in no time. I love this white brimmed hat for sunny days. It goes with just about everything! Plus, not only will it protect your face from the sun’s harsh rays, but you’ll look super stylish, too.”

Incredible ALOE VERA

This succulent has myriad health benefits, especially for your hair and skin

Research has long shown that aloe vera promotes a healthy immune system, good digestion, stable blood sugar levels and other benefits when consumed. But those aren't all the pluses that come from this super plant. It's also been used traditionally as a natural beauty ingredient for radiant, youthful skin and beautiful hair. Here, some tips for how to incorporate aloe vera (which can be used in raw form from the plant or commercially made aloe vera gel) into your beauty regimen.

FOR YOUR SKIN

Nutrients that promote healthy, glowing skin such as beta-carotene and free-radical-fighting antioxidants like vitamins C and E can be found in aloe vera. In fact, a 2009 study in the *Annals of Dermatology* discovered that women over the age of 45 who applied aloe vera gel to their skin for 90 days saw an increase in collagen production as well as improved skin elasticity.

If you have an aloe vera plant, simply break off a leaf as close to the stem as possible. Using a knife, slice off about a 3- to 4-inch piece from the leaf, then cut the skin off lengthwise to reach the gel. Using your fingers, create a mask by gently rubbing the gel onto your face, targeting the forehead, neck and around the eye. Rinse the mask off with warm water after about 20 minutes.

Denise also loves the Aloe Attiva skin care line. The two-step process involves applying the 4x POWERLIXIR Waterless Face Serum, then the 4x POWERHYDRATOR Waterless Face Cream. The gel-like serum contains seven types of hyaluronic acids to help minimize fine lines and keep skin hydrated, plus echinacea flower for wellness and moisturization, and a plant-based collagen for elasticity. Meanwhile, the face cream—which includes ingredients like goji berries, sugar beet and beech tree bud extract—is clinically proven to keep skin hydrated for 72 hours.

ALOE ATTIVA
ALOE ATTIVA

FOR YOUR HAIR

If you're experiencing thinning hair or baldness, give aloe a try. In Ayurveda, which is an ancient medical system with roots in India, aloe vera is known as a rejuvenating ingredient that can help a woman stay youthful. (The Sanskrit name for aloe vera is "ghrita kumari," which translates to "young girl.")

Aloe is rich in proteolytic enzymes, which heal damaged skin cells while stimulating the growth of new ones on the scalp. Aloe's moisturizing qualities can also help to alleviate hair dryness, strengthen follicles and make strands shiny.

To treat damaged, dry hair with aloe vera, create a hair mask with the gel. Remove the gel from the aloe leaf, then apply it from root to tip on clean hair. You can also mix the aloe gel with a carrier oil such as coconut or olive oil for additional moisturizing benefits. Leave the hair mask on for about 30 minutes, then wash as you normally would. For maximum benefits, repeat this process twice per week. (Do not leave this mask in your hair overnight as the fresh aloe can turn bad.)

You can create a similar hair mask with commercially made aloe vera gel, or you can even apply it as a conditioner when taking a shower: Just shampoo your hair as you normally would and then massage in the aloe gel as your final step before rinsing. That's all there is to it!

DIY Sugar Scrubs

Make this super effective and natural exfoliant at home

Sugar scrubs are amazing because they buff away dead skin cells, excess dirt, bacteria and other debris that can dull your complexion and muck up your pores—which can in turn cause blemishes and breakouts. The tiny granules found in the scrubs exfoliate the outermost layer of the skin, leaving it rejuvenated, glowing and incredibly soft. When your skin isn't clogged with bacteria and grime, your skin-care products are likely able to penetrate more deeply and do what they're supposed to do! What's more, the soothing, massage-like motions you use while applying the scrub can do wonders for circulation while encouraging relaxation.

Although sugar scrubs tend to be less abrasive than other exfoliants such as salt scrubs, bear in mind that, in general, exfoliating daily with a scrub is not recommended. Rather, a few times a week should do the trick. If you notice your skin becoming a bit irritated afterward, you may want to reduce the amount of time you spend scrubbing.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING SUGAR SCRUBS?

- **The glycolic acid that is present in sugar helps to fight against hyperpigmentation and acne while brightening and smoothing out the skin at the same time.**
- A natural humectant, sugar will not strip skin of its water content. Instead, it draws moisture from the environment into the skin, for added hydration that leaves it radiant, smooth and supple.
- **Essential minerals including calcium, potassium and selenium found in sugar work together to protect against and flush out harmful toxins.**

USING A SUGAR SCRUB IS SIMPLE!

- Jump in a lukewarm shower (never hot!) for five to 10 minutes to soften skin.
- **Turn the water off. Using circular motions, apply the sugar scrub to your skin. Begin at your feet and make your way up to your shoulders, then down your arms.**
- Don't scrub too hard! Keep the pressure gentle to avoid irritating skin.
- **Rinse the scrub off.**
- Dry off lightly and apply lotion while skin is still damp.
- **Exfoliate up to three times a week.**

MAKE YOUR OWN SUGAR SCRUB!

There are several DIY body scrub recipes you can mix up for yourself and others. You can also use all of these as lip scrubs! Here are a few to get you started.

ALOE VERA SUGAR SCRUB: Aloe vera is incredibly soothing. Combine it with sugar for soft and moisturized skin. All you have to do is mix some aloe vera gel with a cup of sugar and exfoliate away.

BROWN SUGAR SCRUB: If you're suffering from especially dry skin, it's time to bring in the heavyweights, brown sugar and honey! Both are natural humectants, which means they lock moisture in the skin. As the brown sugar sloughs away grime, the raw honey works to soothe the skin. Making the scrub is as simple as mixing a cup of brown sugar with a little honey in a small bowl. Add a cup of coconut oil or olive oil for added moisture.

LEMON SUGAR SCRUB: Lemon is rich in vitamin C, which can help slow early skin aging. Olive oil, meanwhile, is an excellent natural moisturizer. Make this scrub by combining 2 tablespoons of sugar with a spoonful of olive oil and a squeeze of fresh lemon. Massage onto the skin, then leave it on for 30 minutes before rinsing.

Ask Denise

What are the best exercises for a bad back?

DeniseAustin.com online community member Susanne writes in: "I have a bad back. What are my best workout options?"

It's such a great question, and so many people do suffer from back pain. Did you know that 80% of people who have back pain have weak abdominals? Your abs act as a girdle for your spine, and your spine is your lifeline so it's important to keep it healthy. Strengthening the muscles that surround your spine is vital for a healthy back, so I suggest a regular program of abdominal and lower-back exercises. Even when you're sitting around during the day working at your computer, you can still "fidgetcise" by tightening and contracting your ab muscles. Along with doing regular ab workouts, these simple micro moves will help keep your abs strong and, as a result, your spine strong, too! Keeping your hamstrings strong and flexible can also help prevent back pain. Flip to page 14 for some great exercises, including yoga, which uses slow, smooth movements that are an excellent workout for the back. One of my favorite yoga moves to gently stretch the back is the Child's Pose, which you can find on page 19. The Back Strengthener on page 21 is also one of my go-to moves to keep the back muscles fit.

In addition, swimming, water aerobics, biking and walking are all great cardio activities that don't put a lot of stress on your spine. I love my walking workout on page 12 because it's low impact and easy on the joints.

Of course, if you're experiencing severe back pain or have any type of injury, you should really consult your doctor before engaging in any form of exercise. He or she may have some specific suggestions for you.

BONUS!

Scan here for more wellness tips from Denise!

DENISE'S DO'S!

Roundup + Fast Facts

FITNESS DO'S

PAGE 29: As you do your stretches, be sure that your body stays in proper alignment; don't get sloppy. Each movement should be smooth and controlled. Remember: Quality is more important than quantity, so opt for a single good stretch over 10 half-hearted ones.

PRO TIP: When doing Pilates, pay attention to the signals your body is sending. Notice where you are holding your tension. These exercises are designed to teach you how to dial into your body.

DID YOU KNOW? Doing a light workout after you wake up has also been linked to more supple, elastic skin in people over age 40.

NUTRITION DO'S

PAGE 45: Studies show that people are more likely to pace themselves if they play slow, relaxing music during a meal. So put on some classical music—"my favorite is Bach!" says Denise—and nourish your mind while you're nourishing your body.

FAST FACT: Avocado is high in monounsaturated fat, which is the kind that doesn't clog your arteries. Research shows that avocados may protect against heart disease by lowering LDL cholesterol levels.

DID YOU KNOW? It takes about 15 to 20 minutes for your brain to get the message from your stomach that you are full, so eat slowly!

LIFESTYLE DO'S

PAGE 75: "I've always talked about the impact of your attitude on your life, and I'll keep talking about it because it is so important!" Denise says. "When you are on the path to creating a healthy lifestyle, maintaining a positive attitude is as valuable as improving your eating habits and increasing your physical activity. While it can often seem like your attitude is the hardest thing to change, doing so can sometimes be as simple as recognizing what you're feeling and making the conscious decision to change it."

FAST FACT: According to a March 2019 study in the journal *JCI Insight*, during a woman's menopausal stage, she may see up to a fourfold increase in fat and loss of lean body mass.

DID YOU KNOW? Sleep disorders affect between 39% and 47% of perimenopausal women and between 35% and 60% of postmenopausal women.

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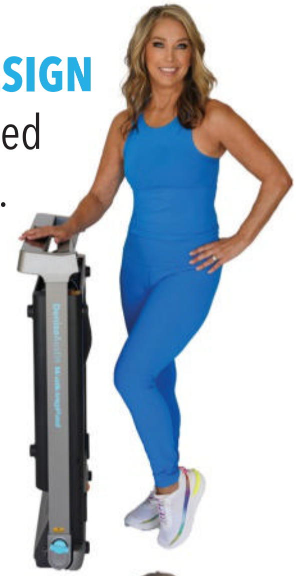

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